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THE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS

BY

JAMES S. CANDLISH, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN THE FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

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PART I.

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

CHAP. I. The Nature and Number of the Sacraments.

II. The Sacraments as Signs.

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PART I.

ON THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND NUMBER OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Use of Outward Rites in Religion.—Every form of religion among men has had, besides its beliefs and devotions, some outward rites and ceremonies, in which these beliefs are expressed, and by which the devotional feelings are sought to be promoted. This doubtless arises from the constitution of human nature, as consisting of a body, by which we are connected with the material world, as well as a soul, by which we have communion with the spiritual and unseen. The nature and function of such external rites have varied very much in different forms of religion. Sometimes the ceremonial has been allowed to grow and multiply, till it has quite overshadowed the spiritual, its meaning has been forgotten, and it is observed for its own sake and not as subordinate to something higher. Thus religion has degenerated into a mere mass of useless and unmeaning ceremonies; and these, ceasing to be significant, have been invested by superstition with a magical efficacy; so that, instead of lifting the soul to higher things, they have brought it into abject bondage to the elements of this world. Such has been the constant tendency of human nature, when it has not been renewed and elevated by the spiritual influences of God's grace and salvation. Pure religion

has been kept alive in the world from the first by communications from God of His grace and truth; which appeared in their fulness when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Now, in the divinely originated and preserved religion of which we find the history in Scripture, God has not excluded the element of rites and ceremonies; but He has taken means so to direct and guard it that it might be preserved pure, not becoming meaningless, but being always significant of spiritual truth, and not superseding, but aiding devotional feeling. Such was the position given to symbolism even in the Old Testament, when, on account of the immature condition of the kingdom of God, it had a comparatively important place; and with the full accomplishment of redemption, and the clearer revelation of heavenly things in the New Testament, the ceremonies of religion were greatly lessened and simplified, so that the direct and close connection of them with spiritual life was made more manifest. Thus in the Christian religion, while outward rites have still a place, they are reduced to the simplest form, and are most intimately associated with those feelings and exercises of the soul that are the essence of religion.

The Name Sacrament.—This is indicated by the fact that the ritual observances of Christianity have from an early time been called by the name of sacraments. This name is taken from the Latin translation of the Greek word which is rendered in the English Bible 'mystery;' but though that word often occurs in the New Testament, and is used there in different meanings, it is never applied to the ordinances that we call sacraments. Not our Lord Himself, or His apostles, but Christian writers about one hundred years after their time, first gave that name to Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and it has been continued to be used ever since. What exactly was meant by it at first is not certain; and in later times a number of different explanations have been given. But there are two reasons, either of which may have led to the choice of the name. It may have been taken

from the word mystery, and if so, it probably was chosen to show that the Christian rites were not mere meaningless observances, but had a significance, and symbolized spiritual things; for mystery sometimes means the secret meaning of a sign or symbol, as in Rev. i. 20, xvii. 7. Or the name may have been chosen because the Latin word *sacramentum* often means an oath, especially the oath of allegiance by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves to their commanders and their country; and so it would indicate that these rites were not merely symbols, but pledges of a personal relation between believers and Christ as their Lord and Leader.

Now both of these are true ideas, and they are the principal ideas belonging to the outward rites of Christianity. For this reason, as well as because the name has been in common use for many hundred years, we apply the word sacrament to designate these ordinances, though it is not given to them in the Bible. It is convenient to have such a name, for we often want to speak of these rites in common; and this is an appropriate name, for it indicates their chief features. But we must remember, that as it is not a Bible name, we cannot infer anything from it, except what we find taught in the Bible itself about the things that are meant by it.

Means of Grace.—Now Christianity is characteristically and pre-eminently a religion of grace: the centre and sum of its doctrine is that faithful saying which is worthy of all acceptation, 'that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;' and the sum of its practical experience is 'union and communion with Christ in grace and glory.' It is a salvation wrought by God for sinners of mankind; and in it we are debtors to His grace for all spiritual blessings. God in Christ is the giver and we are receivers of His free sovereign grace and love. Hence the outward rites of Christianity are not performances by which we do something to obtain God's blessing, or render to Him a payment, or accomplish a work of our own, but rather exercises in which we receive

what He freely gives. This is what is meant when they are called means of grace, or, as it is more fully explained in the Shorter Catechism, 'means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.' What we are called upon in the gospel to do in order to be saved, is to use the means suitable and necessary for that end; and thus it is that these requirements are consistent with salvation being absolutely of free grace. They are needful simply because they are the means which in their own nature lead to the end desired. If a man has fallen overboard a ship, and the sailors throw a rope to him and cry, 'If you lay hold of that, you are saved,' that 'if' does not impair the freeness of the help given to him, since it is nothing else than what is necessary in the nature of the case as the means of his rescue. It is not as if they said, 'If you will promise to pay us for it, or to do something that we wish;' that would be a conditional purchased deliverance. Now all the things that are required in the gospel for our salvation are required in the former way, not in the latter—not as conditions, but simply as means. This is true of faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life, which are the inward means by which Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption; faith being especially the means of our justification, and repentance of our sanctification. In the one we embrace Christ as freely offered in the gospel, and in the other we turn from sin to God in Him.

General Description of Sacraments.—But, besides these inward means of grace, there are also certain outward things that we are required to use in order to be saved and blessed. Some of these are the direct work of the hand of God in providence: His goodness leads us to repentance, His afflictions are designed to warn, humble, and chasten us. These we cannot reduce to any regular rule or order. Others, again, are appointments of God for our observance, and these we can classify and enumerate. They are God's ordinances in the covenant of grace. Now it is among these that the rites we call sacraments find a place.

They are accordingly described in our Shorter Catechism (1) generally as holy ordinances instituted by Christ; that is the general class of things to which they belong. But now (2) how are they distinguished from other things of the same kind, such as the Word read and preached, prayer, praise, the Sabbath, etc., which are all ordinances of Christ? They are distinguished by this, that there are in them what are called sensible signs, *i.e.*, things that we perceive by our senses, that we can see, hear, touch, taste, etc. These outward symbols are the means by which in the sacraments Christ and His benefits are brought before the mind and heart. These parts of the description in the Catechism are all that we need attend to just now, the others we will consider in subsequent chapters: but these are sufficient to give a general knowledge of a sacrament, and to distinguish it from other things of the same kind. This description is one that in substance is accepted by all Christians who recognise such outward rites in the gospel at all,[1] though different sections of the Church lay chief stress upon different parts of the description, and so give to their own more special definitions characteristic forms and colouring.

Number of the Christian Sacraments.—In the early church, the term sacrament or mystery was used in a very vague and indefinite way; and the idea of a symbol was almost the only one recognised, that of special divine institution being left out of sight. The name was given to any mystical and sacred sign, without regard to whether it was appointed as a special ordinance for the use of the Church. Hence the number of the sacraments was very variously reckoned. This uncertainty and indefiniteness as to the use and application of the name continued more or less as long as till the twelfth century, when the scholastic

[1] The Society of Friends, or Quakers as they are generally called, do not regard the rites commonly called sacraments as designed by Christ for permanent observance, believing such outward ceremonies to be inconsistent with the spirituality of the New Testament dispensation.

theology, as it is called, began to flourish, and more precise and logical definitions were made of all that belonged to Christianity. Then the notion of a sacrament was distinctly marked out, as being an outward ordinance in the Church that was both a sign and a means of spiritual grace: and the number of such ordinances was more precisely settled. By this time, however, a number of rites and ceremonies had come into use, for which there is no warrant in Scripture, and a strong tendency had long prevailed to attach undue importance to external observances, as if they could of themselves benefit the soul. Hence, when the exact definition of a sacrament was applied to the forms then in use, it was thought that no fewer than seven of them were entitled to that name; and so it was declared, as it is still held by the Roman and Greek Churches, that there are seven sacraments — Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord's Supper, Penance, Extreme Unction, Ordination, and Matrimony.

When the Reformers detected the corruptions of the Church in their day, and brought its doctrines and practices to the test of the Word of God, they found that the ceremonies observed under the names of Confirmation, Penance, and Extreme Unction had no warrant in Scripture, and that Ordination and Matrimony, though certainly divine institutions, are not symbolical ordinances, and are not applicable to all believers as such. Therefore, while they retained the word sacrament as a convenient theological term, they refused to apply it to any of these five, and held that there are only two sacraments of the New Testament — Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are the two symbolical rites appointed by Christ Himself, and designed for perpetual observance.

Difference in Conception of Sacraments.—This difference as to the number of the sacraments is closely connected with other and deeper differences in the conception of their nature and use. All Christians may be said to agree in general, that sacraments are both signs and means of grace, that they both represent and

apply spiritual blessings. But some give greater prominence to one of these functions, and some to the other. The Mediæval and Roman Catholic Church, in which more importance was attached to the performance of religious ceremonies than to the presentation of the objective truths of the gospel, gave greater prominence to the power of the sacraments to apply grace; the Protestant Churches, which regard the Word of God as the object of faith and the most vital thing for spiritual well-being, give more prominence to the representing than to the applying power of the sacraments. Roman Catholics may be said in substance to hold that the sacraments represent grace because they apply it; Protestants, that they apply grace because they represent it. The former take the idea of a sign in this connection in a very general way, as denoting anything that by reason of combination or positive appointment suggests to the mind the notion of something else; as smoke may be said to be a sign of fire, or the hoisting of a flag, or blowing of a trumpet the sign of the marching of an army. In this way the sacraments may be said to be signs of spiritual blessings, because they are appointed means by which these are conveyed to men, even though in some of them there may be nothing like a symbolical representation of these blessings. Protestants, however, take the idea of a sign in a much more strict and definite sense, and hold that it means a distinct representation or symbol, in the sense in which a picture is the representation of a man, or a review of a battle; and that it is the characteristic mark of a sacrament, as distinguished from other ordinances and means of grace, to represent spiritual things in this sense. In the general sense of anything that suggests spiritual things to the mind, the reading and preaching of the Word, and the offering of praise and prayer, might be said to be signs, and are so as really as several of the ordinances reckoned among the number of the sacraments by the Church of Rome. But the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper stand out from among all the rest as observances of a symbolical or representa-

tive character; and to them accordingly we limit the name of sacraments. They set before us in outward things and actions a picture, as it were, of the spiritual realities of the gospel; and their peculiar power arises in large measure from their having this representative character.

Another point of difference between the Mediæval and Roman Catholic view on the one hand, and the Protestant one on the other, is closely connected with this. The former, giving the chief place to the applying power of the sacraments, has given rise to the idea that each sacrament has its own special and peculiar grace. Hence, as there are many different points in the life of man at which special communications of divine grace are needed, it was supposed that each one of these must have its proper sacrament bringing the needful grace. Thus in part arose the idea of seven sacraments corresponding to the seven stages of the Christian's life—Baptism to its beginning; Confirmation to its coming to maturity; the Lord's Supper to its nourishment; Penance to its restoration when impaired or lost; Ordination to the entrance on office in the Church; Matrimony to the entrance on the married state; and Extreme Unction to the close of life. These are all periods of life that require special grace, and the corresponding sacraments are held to convey that grace. This system seems thus to offer a very full and suitable provision for all the wants of the soul at each successive stage of its life, meeting it at all the critical and necessitous epochs with means of grace suitable to the occasion. The Protestant system with only two sacraments seems to afford a less full and varied provision for our condition and wants.

But the essential doctrine of Protestantism is that all grace that we need is in Christ, and is to be received and enjoyed only in communion with Him, not to be doled out through outward ordinances. Hence all sacraments profit only in so far as they represent Christ with all His benefits, from whom all needful grace for special circumstances is to be derived. Hence, also, we do not need to multiply sacraments as is done

by the Church of Rome ; and the five sacraments which it adds to those recognised by Protestants are opposed on this among other grounds, that they do not represent Christ Himself and all His benefits, but only some special form or aspect of them. While the Catechism of the Council of Trent defines a sacrament simply as a sign of grace or spiritual things in general, the Westminster Confession of Faith, agreeing with most of the Protestant Confessions, is careful to say specifically, that in a sacrament not merely grace in general, but Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

Questions.

What is the use of outward observances in religion in general?
Explain the origin and meaning of the name sacrament.
What was the more general use of the term, and what does it mean as limited to Christian ordinances?
What special feature in such ordinances is due to the fact of Christianity being a religion of grace?
Why do Protestants reject five of the rites held by Roman Catholics to be sacraments? Which of them are recognised as ordinances of God, and which condemned as inventions of men?
What differences in the conception of sacraments underlie this difference as to their number?

CHAPTER II.

THE SACRAMENTS AS SIGNS.

Scripture Statements.—The simplest view that can be taken of the sacraments, is that they are signs representing Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant. This is undoubtedly a true and scriptural view of them. Baptism is called by Peter a figure of

our being saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;[1] and Paul says, that in observing the Lord's Supper we show the death of Christ.[2] The very nature of the ordinances also plainly indicates this. The washing of the body in water is a natural figure, and one frequently used throughout the Bible for the cleansing of the soul from sin;[3] and the nourishment of the body by meat and drink is an equally common illustration of the nourishment of the soul by Christ, as the Bread of Life who came down from heaven and gave His flesh for the life of the world.[4]

Sacraments—Their Evidential Value.—The object of such figures, whether in words or actual things, is to help our understanding. What we see with our eyes is more vivid and clear to us than things of which we only hear or read descriptions. Hence the use of pictures, maps, and diagrams in books. They serve not only to please, but, when rightly employed, to help our understanding of the description or narrative given in words. Significant representations are also of use as helps to the memory in the form of what we call monuments. A statue of some great man keeps alive the remembrance of his character and services; a picture of some momentous event preserves fresh in men's minds the remembrance of its occurrence. In accordance with this law of our nature, Christ has made provision for keeping in men's minds the knowledge of His person and work, and making that as fresh and vivid as possible, by symbolical ordinances. As such, the sacraments have also an important evidential value. A monument erected at the time of some memorable event, and

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 21. This passage ought properly to be rendered thus: 'Water; which also as a figure saves you now, even baptism (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the inquiry of a good conscience after God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' For 'figure,' most modern scholars would put 'antitype;' but the Authorized Version, translating it as in Heb. ix. 24, is quite defensible.

[2] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

[3] See Ps. li. 2, 7; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Acts xxii. 16; 1 Cor. vi. 11; Eph. v. 26, etc.

[4] See John vi. 32–58; Luke i. 53; Matt. v. 6; 1 Cor. x. 3, 4, etc.

preserved to after ages, remains, while it lasts, a most reliable witness of the actual occurrence of the event. Now the rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been observed by the Church in all the ages of its existence, and can be traced back continuously to the time of Christ. They testify to every age the historical truth of the events of His life and death, with which they are connected; and they point by their very form and nature to some of the principal doctrines of the gospel.

Thus, even as historical monuments, the sacraments serve to bring before our minds the Lord Jesus Christ as a truly historical Saviour, and to assure us of the reality of His person and work. When we see them administered, we look upon rites that have been observed continually for the last 1800 years, and that are undoubtedly the same that Jesus directed His disciples to observe, and Himself observed along with them. We are thereby assured that He really lived and died; and that from Him the blessings of Christianity have flowed to the world. We see too, from the nature of the rite in the Lord's Supper, that His death formed the chief part of His work for men, that He gave Himself voluntarily to it, and that He suffered His body to be broken and His blood shed to obtain for men forgiveness of sins, and to make a new covenant or bond of union between them and God; and from the ordinance of Baptism we see that He associated Himself with the Father and the Holy Spirit as the object of worship, trust, and obedience of His followers. Thus these ordinances, even in this their lowest aspect, not only give evidence of the historical reality of the great events of our Lord's life, but testify of the fundamental doctrines of His sacrifice for sin, and of His participation in true Deity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Their Suggestive Value.—But it is not merely or chiefly as evidential signs that the sacraments are of use in their function of representing Christ and His benefits. They serve not only to convince us of the truth and certainty of the great events of His life and death, on which our salvation depends, but also to keep

these events and their meaning in our memory, and, as it were, in our mind's eye. The work of Christ is the great object of His disciples' faith ; it is also the chief motive of their gratitude and love, and the highest object of their imitation. It is therefore of the utmost importance for Christian life, in all these aspects of it, that Christ's work should be much in our thoughts, that we should habitually remember it, and frequently consider its meaning and contemplate its purposes and lessons. This we are helped to do by ordinances that present it outwardly under the form of appropriate symbols. To this purpose the sacraments are not less adapted because they presuppose some knowledge of the truths represented, or require some instruction about them. Every symbol, and even picture or dramatic representation, needs a certain amount of explanation to be intelligible; but just because it suggests and represents, but does not fully explain the subject, it serves to awaken curiosity and interest in those to whom it is new ; while it recalls to those to whom it is familiar a crowd of thoughts that could not be expressed without many words. When God commanded the Israelites to observe the Passover in memory of their deliverance from Egypt, He contemplated that their children, as they grew up from age to age, would be struck with the peculiar observance, and would ask their parents what it meant; and that this would lead them to listen more attentively to the narrative of what the ordinance commemorated, and to take more interest in it (see Ex. xii. 26, 27). A similar end was doubtless meant to be served by the ceremonial observances of the Christian Church. They are fitted to arouse curiosity and lead to inquiry; they clearly show that something more is meant by them than meets the eye or appears to a stranger ; they indicate the importance attached to what they represent; and they thus tend to awaken and maintain an interest in the great objects of Christian faith.

Principle bearing on this.—In regard to the use of the sacraments as signs, the great principle to be observed is, that they are never

to be dissociated from the Word of God in the gospel, which declares the truths that they represent, and to which they are subordinate as appendages. This is the relation in general of illustrations or symbols to narratives or descriptions. The pictures or diagrams with which a book is illustrated serve a very good purpose when taken along with the book itself; they give a more correct, or at least a more vivid idea of the things of which it treats. But if torn away from the book, and used by themselves as a substitute for it, they would be at best very imperfect means of representation, and might even be altogether dark and meaningless. So too, a monument, when the person or event which it was designed to commemorate has been forgotten, becomes utterly useless, as

> 'When kings in dusty darkness hid
> Have left a nameless pyramid.'

In the same way ceremonial observances have often become emptied of their significance when their original purpose has been forgotten, and they have continued to be observed as mere forms, without having any meaning attached to them. The danger of this is to be averted, in the case of the Christian sacraments, by their being closely connected with the Word of the gospel. Even in the Church of Rome this principle is recognised; since the repetition of the words of institution in each case is held to be essential to the validity of the sacraments; and in the Protestant Churches it is more fully applied by the regular association of the preaching of the gospel, in which the great truths of Christianity are set forth and explained, with the administration of the sacraments. Hence the regular practice of our Church is that the sacraments be administered after sermon; and if in some cases it be not so, there ought always to be some words of instruction and explanation setting forth the truths of the gospel that are represented in the outward ordinance.

Practical Inference.—This principle also affords an important guide to the practical use of the sacraments. If we would derive

from them the full benefit they are fitted to convey, we should study the Word of God as setting forth the truths which they represent, especially the great facts of the coming, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the way of a sinner's union to Him, and the blessings He bestows upon believers; we should have our minds filled and saturated with these great themes, so that when we see the sacramental signs, there may be an abundance of thoughts and memories at once brought up to our minds. This is one great secret of a profitable use of the sacraments. If we are content with meagre, general, and confused knowledge of the great truths of the gospel, we cannot wonder though the representation of them should only awaken vague and dull impressions; while if we have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly, the sacramental signs, though simple in their form, will call up in our souls vivid and great ideas, and suggest fresh aspects and lessons of these precious realities.

Parts of a Sacrament.—The function of the sacraments as signs explains the following statements of the Westminster Standards: 'The parts of a sacrament are two: the one an outward and sensible sign, used according to Christ's own appointment; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified' (Larger Catechism, 163). 'There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other' (Confession, ch. xxvii. sec. 2).

There has been some difference of opinion as to whether the name sacrament includes both the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace signified, or should only be applied to the former. Since as we have seen the word sacrament is not a scriptural one, its meaning cannot be authoritatively decided; and it may be legitimately used in any sense that is distinctly understood and agreed upon. It would seem simpler, and more in accordance with the earliest use of the word, to understand by it only the outward sign; but the custom of later

theologians has been to include in it, along with this, the spiritual grace signified. To this position much importance is attached by some, as if it secured a high view of the power of the sacraments; but in reality the question is merely one of words; and the language of the Larger Catechism, and of many of the ablest Reformed divines, shows that it is quite possible to adopt the more comprehensive definition without ascribing any inherent efficacy to the outward rite. When the sacraments are rightly observed by believers in Christ in the exercise of faith, love, and devotion, then they receive and enjoy not only the outward sign, but also the grace signified by it; and in all cases that grace is really offered to all who receive the sacraments. In that sense both may be said to be parts of the sacraments; but it is not certain that wherever the sacraments are observed with outward propriety and order, there the inward blessings are received; and the whole question of the nature of the connection between the visible and the spiritual is left to be decided on its own proper grounds, even when it is admitted that both are parts of the sacraments.

But the relation that undoubtedly exists of the one being the representation of the other serves to explain how their names and attributes may be interchanged. For nothing is more common in all languages than to express the relation of figures or symbols to what they represent by words denoting identity. A few scriptural examples will illustrate this usage. 'The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years,' etc., Gen. xli. 26; 'Thou art this head of gold,' Dan. ii. 38; 'This is he which received seed by the wayside,' 'The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one,' Matt. xiii. 19, 38; 'I am the door of the sheep,' 'I am the good shepherd,' John x. 7, 9, 11, etc.; 'I am the true vine,' etc., John xv. 1.

No one misunderstands these expressions, or supposes that they mean that any transformation takes place, or that the things mentioned are literally identified with those they are said to be.

The same mode of speaking is used of symbolical ordinances, as of circumcision, Gen. xvii. 13: 'My covenant shall be in your flesh,' *i.e.* as explained in verse 11, 'the token of the covenant.' In Ex. xii. 11, the lamb is called the Lord's passover. In like manner Protestants think that the phrases used of the Lord's Supper, 'This is my body,' 'This is my blood of the New Testament,' may most naturally be understood not as declaring a transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, but as meaning that the bread and wine represent to us the body and blood of Christ; just as the seven kine and seven ears of Pharaoh's dream represented seven years; and as the door, and the shepherd, and the vine represent Christ. The nature of a sacrament as a symbolical ordinance requires this, as it is pithily put by an old Scottish divine:[1]—'Attour, gif the bread were transubstantiate, it suld become the thing signified; gif it becomes the thing signified, this sacrament suld want a signe, and sa it suld not be ane sacrament; for every sacrament, as ye hard, is ane signe.'

Questions.

Show from Scripture that the sacraments are signs.
Give illustrations of what is meant by this.
What is the use of such signs? for evidence? for spiritual life?
What is the relation of the Word to the sign?
What are the parts of a sacrament?
What use of language arises from the relation of these proofs?

CHAPTER III.

THE SACRAMENTS AS SEALS

Besides the name of signs, that of seals has also been generally given by Christian divines to the sacraments. The only direct

[1] Robert Bruce's *Sermons*, p. 84, Wodrow Society.

warrant in Scripture for the application of this idea is in Rom. iv. 12, where Paul describes circumcision in the case of Abraham as a sign and a seal of the righteousness of faith. But the extension of this designation to the sacraments of the New Testament is fully warranted by the fact, that we find in each of them that special function that is denoted by the word seal, and that it is a distinct and important part of their use. To perceive this, we must consider what is the essential idea of a seal as applied to spiritual things.

General Idea of a Seal.—A seal is, strictly speaking, just a particular kind of sign, a mark or token. In Latin, the words are originally the same. *Signare* means to seal as well as to signify; and the later *sigillum*, whence the English seal, is simply a diminutive of *signum*, a sign. The distinctive nature of a seal among signs in general is, that it is a personal sign or token. In early ages, before writing was common, every man of distinction had his seal with its characteristic impression, by which he could authenticate any document or message that he wished to send to another. The impress of this was equivalent to his signature; and afterwards, when writing became more common, it was used in addition to the signature for more complete attestation, or on the outside of a letter, for securing secrecy and respect for its private character. There are many instances in ancient records of the use of seals for these purposes. In the book of Jeremiah (xxxii.) we have an account of the purchase of a piece of land being completed by subscribing and sealing the record; and in Neh. ix. 38–x. 29, we read of the covenant being established by the princes, Levites, and priests sealing unto it. For a man to seal to any document was the same thing as to subscribe with his hand to it (Isa. xliv. 5). Thus letters sealed with the king's seal carried with them the king's authority.[1] Now, in all such cases, the seal or signature gives assurance of the personal mind and will of him whose it is, and so gives the document the

[1] See 1 Kings xxi. 8; Esth. iii. 10, 12, viii. 2, 10.

character of a personal communication from him. Anything, too, that gave such assurance would serve the same purpose. It was often the custom, instead of sending merely an impress of the seal, to give or send the seal itself, or some other article, as a token to the person to whom the communication was made.[1]

Figurative Application of the Idea.—The general idea of a seal, then, is a confirmation of a truth or message by a token, more particularly by an unmistakable indication of the personal mind and will of him from whom it comes. On this idea are founded most of the figurative or spiritual applications of the term in the Bible. Thus it is said, John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true,' *i.e.* has given his personal attestation to that great truth. Again Paul says, Rom. xv. 28, in reference to his going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints: 'When I have performed this, and sealed unto them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain,' *i.e.* when I have given personal attestation to the Jewish Christians of the brotherly love of the Gentiles, by handing their gift to the saints at Jerusalem. Once more, 1 Cor. ix. 2: 'The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord,' *i.e.* the token that it is the personal will of the Lord that I should be an apostle. Again, 2 Tim. ii. 19: 'The firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.' Some indeed regard seal here as meaning simply inscription; but it is quite possible, and more in accordance with usage, to understand it in the more proper sense as a guarantee given by the expression of God's mind and will. In those passages that speak of the sealing of persons, not of things, probably the application of the figure is slightly different, and is taken from the use of the seal as marking what belongs to its owner. But we need not enter into an examination of these passages here, since, when circumcision is called a seal of the righteousness of faith, it is clearly meant as a token in the

[1] See Gen. xxxviii. 18 and xli. 42.

same way as in the passages just cited, and these passages, as well as the general use of language, warrant that application of it.

Application to the Sacraments.—Now, taking this idea of a seal, we find that it applies admirably to the New Testament sacraments. When our Lord said, at the institution of the Supper, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' He gave the ordinance such a personal character as to make it not merely a sign but a seal, a token of His love and desire for our loving remembrance of Him. A picture of an absent friend represents him, and as often as I look on it, recalls him to my memory; it is a sign, and it may be nothing more. It may have been drawn by myself, or bought with money, or received from some third person; still it is a sign, and valuable as such. But if that or anything else has been given me by my friend as a token of his friendship; if he bade me keep it in remembrance of him, then we have the element of personal mind and will, and it is not merely a sign but a seal. There are many signs of Christ that are not seals, and therefore not sacraments. The sun may remind us of Him as the Light of the world; the vine may suggest to us the true Vine; the lamb may recall the Lamb of God, and so on. But these were not appointed by Him for the express purpose of assuring us of His grace and love as the sacraments were. Christ instituted Baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper, as a memorial of Him, and of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, the three Agents in our salvation, who are one God, and unto whose one name we, by becoming His disciples, are united.

Appeal to the Heart.—The use of the sacraments as seals is apt to appear a more vague and undefined thing than their function as signs; but the reason of that probably is, that seals or tokens in general appeal more to the feelings than to the understanding, to the heart rather than to the head. What is the value of a memorial, a keepsake, or the like, it may be hard to express in exact logical definitions, and a hard-headed matter-of-fact man

may find it difficult to understand. But every one who has any spark of sentiment in his soul feels and appreciates the preciousness of such things, even though he may not be able clearly to explain it. Now God would make provision in the Christian system for the emotional as well as for the intellectual side of our nature; and accordingly He has given to the sacraments the character of seals as well as of signs, tokens and pledges of His love and faithfulness, as well as illustrations of His great work for our salvation. The healthy growth of spiritual life depends largely on the due proportionate development of Christian knowledge and Christian feeling. Ours should be an intelligent religion, founded on a believing apprehension of divine truth; but it should also be an emotional or heart religion, in which these truths are received with the feelings of penitence, trust, love, joy, hope, that they are fitted to call forth. It is because they are addressed to both these parts of our nature, as signs helping the understanding to clear and vivid conceptions of spiritual things, and as seals awakening and quickening the corresponding spiritual feelings and emotions, that the sacraments are so well fitted to be means of promoting Christian life.

It is obvious that as seals, even more than as signs, the sacraments are appendages to the Word, and ought never to be separated from it. A token or keepsake derives its whole value from the promise or assurance with which it is associated. If that fail, or is forgotten, it is the most useless and melancholy thing in the world. So are the sacraments when observed as mere ceremonial rites, without any affectionate remembrance of the Lord who gave them to His Church as keepsakes in remembrance of Him. But just as very small and trifling things in themselves, that to a stranger would be utterly valueless, acquire in our eyes a perfectly priceless value when they have been given as tokens of a deep and strong love; so the simple, poor, and mean-looking ordinances of Baptism and the Supper, just the application of a little water and the eating a morsel of bread and a sip of wine, are to the earnest Christian

more precious than any other outward thing he has, since they are the memorials of that love that is deeper, stronger, and tenderer than any others; and that is the centre of his new life.

It is to be observed that the sacraments are not said to seal those who receive them; and so the phrase sometimes applied to them, 'sealing ordinances,' is not quite correct. They are seals of the righteousness of faith; they seal or confirm to us God's promises and Christ's love; but there is no warrant in Scripture for saying that they seal us; though the Church of Rome has made it a doctrine that Baptism and Ordination imprint a character or stamp, as it were, on the soul, which is indelible. Some of the ancient Christian writers spoke of Baptism as a seal in this sense, that it marks out believers as belonging to Christ and God. But in the New Testament, whenever Christians are said to be sealed, it is not by any outward rite, but by God Himself, through His Spirit, that this is said to be done (2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13, iv. 30). It seems better, therefore, to keep to the simpler language used by the Reformation divines, and to say, not that the sacraments seal us, but that they are seals, inasmuch as they seal or confirm to us the promises of the gospel.

Questions.

What is the meaning and use of a seal, and how does it differ from a sign?

Give instances of signs that are not seals, of seals that are not signs, and of things that are both.

How does it appear that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are seals?

Distinguish between the sealing of the sacraments and of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SACRAMENTS AS MEANS OF GRACE.

The Sacraments apply the Benefits of Christ's Mediation.—Besides representing and sealing the benefits of the New Covenant in Christ, the ordinances that we call sacraments, also by doing so, apply or communicate them. This appears from the way in which they are spoken of in various places of Scripture. We read that 'Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing (more properly, bath) of water by the Word' (Eph. v. 25, 26); and again, that God saved us 'by the washing (here, too, properly, bath) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost' (Titus iii. 5). In both these passages it is most probable that the reference is to the sacrament of Baptism; though it is possible that it may be only to the general figure embodied in that sacrament. But in Col. ii. 12 there is an express mention of baptism as a means of spiritual quickening: 'Buried with Christ in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.'[1] In regard to the Lord's Supper, the most explicit passage is 1 Cor. x. 16: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (*i.e.* joint participation) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' But the belief that the sacraments are means of grace does not rest merely upon a few single texts, but on the general conviction, which to a Christian is most sure, that the Saviour, who has commanded us to observe these ordinances in remembrance of Him,

[1] Rom. vi. 3, 4 and Gal. iii. 27 may also be referred to; but it is doubtful whether being baptized into Christ does not mean baptism of the Spirit by which we are really united to Christ.

does not deceive us with vain and delusive signs, but really gives what He represents ; and on the experience of believers in all ages, that in the observance of these ordinances, as of all Christ's appointments, they have really been blessed with fellowship with the Lord.

How these Benefits are applied.—It is necessary, however, to understand aright how these ordinances communicate the blessings that are associated with them, and for that purpose to consider in general how it is that we are made partakers of spiritual blessings at all. Now, the Bible teaches that all spiritual blessings are in Christ,—grace and truth, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in a word, eternal life,—and are all freely offered to us and to all men in Him ;[1] while it is the work of the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ, to convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, to enable us to know the things that are freely given us of God, and to call Jesus Lord, in a word, to make us partakers of Christ and all that is His.[2] This work the Spirit effects by working in us faith in Christ ; for by faith we are united to Christ, saved, and made partakers of all spiritual blessings.[3] But in so doing the Spirit uses means, and deals with us as intelligent and voluntary creatures, not moving us by mere supernatural power working as by magic without any exercise of our minds or wills, but by enlightening our understandings by the discovery of the truth, awakening our conscience by convictions of sin and duty, and moving our wills by appropriate motives and persuasions. In a word, the presentation of Christ to the soul, as the Saviour freely offered in the gospel, is the great means that the Spirit uses for our salvation ; and when He does by His divine power persuade and enable us to receive and rest upon Christ, He begins and carries on our spiritual life.

[1] John i. 4, 12, 14, 16 ; 1 Cor. i. 30 ; Eph. i. 3 ; 1 John v. 11, 12.

[2] John xv. 26, xvi. 8–11 ; 1 Cor. ii. 10–12, xiv. 3, 12, 13.

[3] Eph. ii. 8, iii. 17 ; John iii. 14–18, 36, vi. 35, 53–58, 63 ; 1 Pet. i. 21–23, ii. 4, 5.

By the Word.—This is the way in which the Word of God is made effectual for our salvation. It presents to us Jesus Christ and His work for us, and offers to us eternal life in Him. In whatever way the gospel is presented, whether in the inspired records themselves, or in the authoritative proclamation of it by the ministers of Christ, or even in any vague and general rumour or tradition of the mercy of God that may by His grace be sufficient to lead to trust in His forgiveness, the Holy Spirit makes these means effectual for awakening and strengthening faith, by which the soul lives. The Word is the means of grace, because it presents to the soul Christ in whom all grace dwells ; but without the inward working of the Spirit on the soul of man, the testimony and offer in the Word would not be accepted, and the soul would not receive life.

By the Sacraments.—In the very same way the sacraments are means of grace. They are, as signs and seals, appendages to the Word. In the right use of them we have the gospel testimony and offer, not in its bare essence, but illustrated by most appropriate figures, and confirmed by most affecting tokens. But it is the same thing that is set forth in the Word and in the sacraments ; it is Christ crucified as the Saviour of sinners, and it is from Christ Himself that all blessings flow, not from the things that present Him to us. If we derive more spiritual blessing from one ordinance than from another, it is not because the ordinance has more power in itself to bless, but because it gives us a clearer view, or a firmer hold, of Christ. Further, just as the Word is not effectual for the salvation of the hearers, unless the Holy Spirit open the understanding and the heart to receive its truths and offers in faith ; so the sacraments do not profit except when He works in the same way in those who receive them. The Spirit of God makes the reading and preaching of the Word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation ;[1] and in like manner the

[1] Shorter Catechism, 89.

sacraments become effectual means of salvation only through the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them.[1] This is the teaching of our Catechisms, placing the Word and sacraments on the same line, as being means of grace in the same way; and we believe that this view is in accordance with Scripture.

Faith alone the Means on our Part. — It is the fundamental principle of Protestantism, that our salvation is in Christ alone, and is to be received by faith alone on our part. The new life begins with union to Christ in the Spirit's work of effectual calling, in which faith begins; and it is continued by the continual exercise of that faith; it grows and strengthens by our being more and more filled with the Spirit, and conformed to the image of Christ. Thus it can be promoted in no other way than by the increase and invigoration of faith in the soul, receiving more abundantly out of the fulness of Christ, and sharing more fully in His life. Now that on which our faith rests, and by which it lays hold of Christ, is the testimony of God in the gospel, setting forth and offering Christ to sinners. This testimony in the fullest sense embraces not only the Word written and spoken, but the sacraments, *i.e.* the signs and seals with which the Word is clothed, and which are, as Augustine and Luther used to say, a visible word, presenting that to the soul through the eye which the spoken Word presents through the ear. Thus, by the sacraments as really as by the Word, God truly presents Christ to us that we may receive Him by faith, and that receiving Him we may have life and have it more abundantly.

Magical Theory of Church of Rome.—So far all Protestants may be said to be agreed as to the efficacy of the sacraments; and in thus asserting that they are made effectual only by the power of the Spirit, and when there is faith on our part, they differ from

[1] Shorter Catechism, 91.

the theory that grew up in the Middle Ages, and is maintained by the Church of Rome, that the sacraments bestow spiritual blessings by a power inherent in themselves as mere outward acts. This theory is conveniently described as a magical one, because it asserts an efficacy in them analogous to the supposed power of magic, and because it actually arose in the ages when the belief in magic prevailed. Michael Scott, about whose name so many magic legends have gathered, lived within the thirteenth century, in which the mediæval doctrine of the sacraments was raised to its highest pitch. Now the belief about magic was, that mysterious and extraordinary powers could be imparted to certain things by particular forms of words, as spells or incantations, by which they might be transformed in appearance, or made to produce effects beyond the ordinary course of nature. Quite a number of illustrations of this will be found in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel; e.g.*:—

> 'A moment then the volume spread,
> And one short spell therein he read;
> It had much of glamour might,
> Could make a lady seem a knight,' etc.—Canto iii. 9.[1]

No doubt, as that poem also shows, the power of magic was supposed to be due to evil spirits, and its use was therefore an unlawful and forbidden art. But the Church believed that the same sort of mysterious efficacy was given to material things by divine power; and when her priests in the sacraments pronounced the proper form of words over the outward elements, these acquired the virtue of purifying and blessing the soul. So the Church of Rome teaches that the sacraments, simply as outward rites, are the instruments through which God saves and sanctifies men. As the civilised world has ceased to believe in magic, that which led to this form of doctrine has disappeared. But even before that, the Reformers rejected the magical theory as untrue, on the ground of the testimony of Scripture and spiritual experience, and maintained that the Spirit of God works

[1] See also Canto i. 11, ii. 13, and iii. 23, and other passages.

our salvation, not through outward rites as such, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Protestant Views.—But Protestants have never been quite of one mind as to the precise relation between the outward part of the sacrament, and the spiritual blessing that depends on faith. All agree that the outward act is a sign and seal of the spiritual blessing, and that when there is faith in the receiver, that outward act is accompanied with the spiritual blessing which it represents. Thus, when a believer is baptized, he receives Christ for the washing away of his sins; but he receives Him by faith, and not, as he receives bodily cleansing, by the application of water. When a believer receives the Lord's Supper, he receives Christ as the bread of life for his soul's nourishment by faith, while he receives the bread and wine by his mouth. But if this be so, then the outward act may be said to be more than a mere sign and seal of the inward blessing; for as a sign and seal it naturally tends to strengthen faith by which the blessing is received, and so really helps towards the reception and enjoyment of the spiritual blessing. Thus, simply as signs and seals, the sacraments by aiding our faith are also means to our communion with Christ. This is what is called a moral influence, *i.e.* such as consists simply in the presentation of truths and motives to the mind and heart. Those who have been most afraid of ascribing undue efficacy to outward rites have gone to the opposite extreme from the magical theory, and held that the sacraments have no more than this moral influence;[1] but most who have thought so, and sometimes spoken of the sacraments as mere signs, would be willing, when the meaning is distinctly explained, to admit that in this sense they are means of grace.

There are some who think that God never does in any way exercise more than moral influence on men, by teaching, persuading, reasoning with them; and such clearly cannot admit

[1] This was the view of Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, and has been held by some in the Reformed Churches

that He does anything more direct or effectual in the sacraments.[1] But those who hold what are called the doctrines of grace, which are taught more or less fully in the creeds of all the churches, believe that besides moral influence God exercises a direct power by His Spirit on the hearts of men, leading them to Himself; and that this is the secret of all spiritual life. Many, however, who most firmly maintain this, and do not scruple to speak of the Word of God or the gospel as a means through which this direct spiritual power is exerted, refuse to say the same of the sacraments, because they think it is not warranted in Scripture and tends to superstition.

Others, however, have thought that there is no need of this distinction between the Word and the sacraments; and that both alike, and in the same sense, may be said to be means not only of moral influence, but of direct spiritual power.[2] Now this is manifestly a difference on a very subordinate and somewhat obscure point, on which we have no direct teaching in Scripture, since the distinctions on which the question turns are not drawn there, but were made by divines in much later times. It is only indirectly that we can get any light from the Bible upon it; and the decision depends very much on whether we give certain passages a literal or a figurative interpretation. If Eph. v. 26, and Titus iii. 5, refer to the sacrament of Baptism, then they seem to ascribe to it more than a merely moral influence on our salvation. Now, though many good interpreters take these passages in a figurative sense, the fact that the word rendered 'washing' in both places should be rather translated 'laver' or 'bath,' makes it on the whole more probable that the sacrament of Baptism is meant; and therefore that we should regard it as the means, not merely of moral influence, but of direct spiritual operation on the soul. This view seems also to be the one

[1] This was held by the Socinians, and by some, the less evangelical, of the Arminians.

[2] This was the view of Calvin, and has been adopted more or less explicitly by most of the Reformed Churches, though some members of these have always leaned more to the position of Zwingli.

implied in the Westminster Standards, which teach that the grace which is exhibited[1] in or by the sacraments depends upon the work of the Spirit (Conf. ch. xxvii. sec. 3), and that the sacraments become effectual means of salvation . . . . by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them (Shorter Catechism, 91). Here not only are the sacraments said to be precisely what the Word is, 'effectual means of salvation,' but it is explained that they are so by the working of the Spirit in the souls of men.

This view involves the recognition of an operation that is more mysterious and hard to define than the other, and those who have desired clear and intelligible statements have been generally averse to it; but it has not only some countenance from Scripture, but also the advantage of being most fitted to unite all the different sections of the Church. It was formulated by Calvin as the expression of his own view of Scripture teaching, but also with the hope of mediating between the more extreme opinions of the followers of Zwingli on the one hand, and of Luther on the other. It did succeed in gaining the favour of the former, as at least thoroughly consistent with evangelical doctrine; so that although in the Reformed Churches the Zwinglian and Calvinistic types of sacramental doctrine have continued to exist, they have been mutually regarded as quite allowable and safe. From the Lutherans Calvin's irenical attempt hardly obtained fair play; though it really does secure what their best divines insist upon as the essential points. If men could thoroughly understand one another's meaning, it would probably be found that no earnest spiritually-minded Christian is very far removed from Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments.

The Lutherans hold all that Calvin does, and something more; but that concerns almost entirely what unbelievers receive in the

[1] The word 'exhibit' is used by the Westminster Divines in the sense of not merely showing but bestowing. Cf. Larger Catechism, 162, with Shorter Catechism, 92, where 'exhibit' in the former stands for 'apply' in the latter.

sacraments. In order to avoid the danger that seemed to them to lie in Zwingli's view, of making the blessing of the sacraments depend on our changing moods, they thought it necessary to maintain that the blessing was there whether men believed it or not, and is really given even to unbelievers. Hence, since they have no faith, the consequence followed that Christ and His benefits must be given and received in or with the outward elements; and thus the Lutheran doctrine, in appearance, approximates to the Roman Catholic one, though it is really very different in nature and spirit, and much more truly akin to that of Calvin. Lutherans agree with Calvinists as to what believers receive in and through the sacraments; their chief if not only difference is as to what unbelievers receive in them, and that surely cannot be an essential part of the Christian doctrine on the subject. The differences among evangelical Protestants as to the efficacy of the sacraments, though they have unhappily caused much controversy and separation, are not really great or vital, and have been much exaggerated by misunderstanding and confusion of ideas.

Questions.

How does it appear that the sacraments are 'means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption'?

What other such means are there? Inward? Outward?

Whose work is it to make us partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

How does He do so?

Explain the theory against which the words in Shorter Catechism, 91, *'not from any virtue in them or in him that doth administer them,' are directed.*

Explain the words in that answer, 'by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them.'

Show the parallel between the efficacy of the Word and that of the sacraments.

CHAPTER V.

FOR WHOM THE SACRAMENTS ARE INTENDED.

In various important respects, as we have seen, the sacraments are means of grace in the same sense and way as the Word is, both alike being presentations of God's truths and promises in Christ, and of Christ Himself in them, to the minds and hearts of men, made effectual by the Holy Spirit, through faith on our part. But there are also certain differences between them, from which it appears to whom the sacraments ought to be administered.

1. **The Sacraments Appendages of the Word.**—The sacraments being appendages to the Word, like illustrations to a book and tokens to a promise, are of no avail without the Word; whereas it, even without the sacraments, would present to our faith Jesus Christ with all His benefits. Such things as pictures, maps, and diagrams are very useful as illustrations and helps to understand a book or a lecture; but if we neglect the book or lecture, and look only at the illustrations, they may interest or amuse us, but will not convey the instruction they were intended to give. So, too, a promise or assurance of affection may be enough for the heart to rest upon without any outward token or keepsake; but the best outward token is of no avail or value when the promise is forgotten or broken. This is beautifully brought out by Shakespeare in the following dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia:—

Oph. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to redeliver;
I pray you now receive them.
Ham. No, no. I never gave you aught.
Oph. My honour'd lord, I know right well you did;
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,

> Take these again ; for to the noble mind
> Rich gifts grow poor when givers prove unkind.
> —*Hamlet,* Act iii. Scene 1.

2. **The Sacraments come after the Word.**—For a similar reason, the Word naturally comes before the sacraments ; and they cannot profit those who have not first heard and believed the Word. As signs they are of no use to any but those who know in some measure what they represent ; and more especially, as seals, they are meaningless to any but those who have a regard for Him of whose love they testify. A token of love presupposes at least a willingness to receive the love of him who gives it : it would be of no value to one hostile or indifferent to him. So the sacraments are fitted for cherishing and increasing the life of faith when it has already begun, but not for imparting it where it has not been before. They may, indeed, sometimes be the means of conversion ; but they are not, in their distinctive nature, adapted for that. The Word, again, is adapted for both purposes : it has greater variety and flexibility, so to say, than the sacraments, and addresses itself in its various parts to men in all spiritual states. Hence,

3. **The Word for the World, the Sacraments for the Church.**—While the Word is to be preached to all men, to every creature, the sacraments are to be administered only to those who are recognised as gathered out of the world by the Word and Spirit of God. They are among the holy things that are not to be given to dogs, the pearls not to be cast before swine (Matt. vii. 6), but only to be given to those who will appreciate and can use them. Inwardly and really these are they who are regenerate and have faith in Christ ; and as each man may and should judge himself in the sight of God, so, if the question be, Who ought to seek or come forward to the sacraments ? the answer that must be given is, Only those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But as the Church cannot judge infallibly of the spiritual state of men, and yet has a duty to discharge in this matter, if the ques-

tion be, Who should be admitted to receive the sacraments by the Church or its office-bearers? the answer must be, Those who appear to them, using the judgment of charity according to the principles and rules of God's Word, to be truly regenerate, and such as will use the sacraments in faith, and so profit by them.

The Sacraments belong to Church Members.—In a word, the sacraments belong to the members of the Church of Christ as being His tokens of love to His bride, for whom He gave Himself that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. v. 27). In the judgment of God, and of each man's own conscience, judging himself in God's sight, they belong to the true Church of the redeemed which is invisible. In the judgment of the office-bearers of the Church, who must be as much afraid to deny the tokens of Christ's love to any who are His as to give them to any who are His enemies, they belong to the Church as it appears to the eye of Christian charity, *i.e.* to what we call the visible Church. Such is the general principle as to the persons for whom the sacraments are intended, that is derived from a consideration of their nature and purpose in general; the more particular directions as to who ought to receive them must be learned from what Scripture teaches about Baptism and the Lord's Supper severally.

The Sacraments Badges of Christian Profession.—It follows from this general principle, that the sacraments are one of the things that outwardly distinguish the members of the Church of Christ from the world; and that they were appointed for this, among other ends: to be marks or badges of our Christian profession before the eyes of men. This was the case with many of the symbolical ordinances imposed on the people of God in Old Testament times, such as circumcision, the laws of meats, washings, and the like, by which Israel was marked off from the Gentiles. In the Christian Church, however, this is so far from

being the sole or the chief end of the rites we call sacraments, that it is hardly ever referred to in the New Testament. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are always referred to in connection with their higher and more spiritual purposes, though there is possibly also an allusion to their use as outward badges in 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, and Eph. iv. 5. The members of the churches are never addressed or described as 'baptized' or 'communicants,' or distinguished from 'unbaptized' or 'non-communicants,' as Israel is so often designated 'the circumcision' in contrast with 'the uncircumcised.' Where Christian churches are described, it is always by inward qualities, or by the direct outward expression of these, as—'Beloved of God, called to be saints,' Rom. i. 7; 'Them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,' 1 Cor. i. 2; 'The saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus,' Eph. i. 1. See also 1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Pet. i. 1; Jude 1.

This shows that while the sacraments are signs of a Christian profession, and marks to distinguish the Church from the world, they can only be really so, according to the meaning and spirit of the New Testament teaching, when they are truly the expressions of those more inward spiritual things which are the genuine characteristics and notes of that kingdom that is not of this world.

Questions.

Point out the differences between the Word and the sacraments as means of grace—(1) *as to their relative independence*, (2) *as to their design*, (3) *as to the persons to whom they ought to be given.*

Explain the difference between the questions, Who ought to seek the sacraments? and, To whom ought the Church to give them? and give the answer to each.

Describe from Scripture the badges by which Christians are known from the world.

PART II.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

CHAP. I. Baptism: Its Institution and Form.

II. The Things signified by Baptism.

III. The Pledges given in Baptism.

IV. The Persons to whom Baptism is to be administered.

V. The Efficacy of Baptism.

VI. The Practical Use of Baptism.

PART II.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

BAPTISM: ITS INSTITUTION AND FORM.

Scripture Warrant.—The authority for the perpetual observance of baptism in the Christian Church is found in our Lord's command to His disciples after His resurrection, recorded in Matt. xxviii. 18–20; Mark xvi. 15, 16. But this is not the first mention of baptism in the New Testament, and it is spoken of there as a thing with which the disciples were already familiar. Before the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, his forerunner John had accompanied his call to repentance with the act of baptizing in Jordan those who obeyed that call (Matt. iii. 1–12; Mark i. 4–8; Luke iii. 1–18); and when Jesus came forth as a public teacher, and gathered disciples around Him, He also, perhaps in some cases with His own hands, and certainly by those of His disciples, administered the same rite (John iii. 22, 26, iv. 1, 2).[1]

[1] The most natural explanation of these passages seems to be, that Jesus did not Himself baptize in any case; and that John iii. 22 is to be understood in the same way as chap. iv. 1 is explained by verse 2, that Jesus is said to baptize because His disciples did so by His authority. But it is possible that the former passage refers to His having at first baptized some Himself, and the latter to His afterwards leaving that function to His disciples. In either case His reason was doubtless that of Paul afterwards (1 Cor. i. 15–17), that the preaching of the Gospel is a more important work than the administration of the sacrament of baptism.

There was no difference in the outward rite between the baptism of John, that of Jesus' disciples during His life on earth, and that which He commanded His disciples to administer after His resurrection. Nor does there seem to have been any difference in the meaning and purpose of the ordinance in each case; although, with the successive stages in which the ordinance is found, there was an advance in the fulness and clearness with which the spiritual things signified by it were understood and appropriated.

The Name Baptism.—In all the places where the rite is spoken of, it is expressed in our English Bibles by the simple transference of the Greek words 'baptize' and 'baptism.' This is done rightly and unavoidably; for though the words in the original would be more expressive, because they had a meaning in that language which they cannot have in ours, yet it is clear that they are used in the New Testament not in their mere literal meaning, but to denote a special religious rite. The word 'baptize' means literally to immerse, to bathe, or to wash; and in some places it is rendered properly enough by the last of these, and 'baptism' by washing (Mark vii. 4; Heb. ix. 10). They might, perhaps, be translated 'bathe' and 'bathing' in these places; and in Matt. xx. 22, 23, Mark x. 38, 39, and Luke xii. 50, probably baptism might be better rendered 'immersion,' as that is undoubtedly the idea conveyed by the word as there used. But when a religious rite is spoken of, any of these renderings would be manifestly inadequate. So in John i. 25 we read that the Pharisees asked John, 'Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?' *i.e.* not simply, Why dost thou immerse, or bathe, or wash? but, Why dost thou do this as a sacred rite? So, again, Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (for that is the correct rendering of the phrase); but no meaning could be got from this by the use of any of the literal translations of the word, leaving out of view

the religious character of the ordinance. As there is no way of expressing this in English except by transferring the Greek word itself to our language, we are obliged to forego the advantage that its expressiveness gave to the word in the original.

The Rite.—At the same time we must undoubtedly look to the meaning of the word to learn what is the ordinance that Christ has enjoined His people to observe. But we must look at what the word meant in its religious use, and not merely in common life; since we find that from the very earliest mention of it in New Testament history it is used expressly to denote a sacred rite. It corresponds to the word in the Old Testament which is generally rendered 'dip;' but that word came to be used for the expression that occurs so frequently in the Levitical laws, 'he shall wash his flesh in water,' Lev. xiv. 8, 9, xv. 5, 6, 7, etc., xvi. 4, 24, 28, xvii. 15; Num. xix. 7, 19, etc. That the two expressions are the same in meaning appears from 2 Kings v. 10, 14, where the command given by Elisha to Naaman is, 'Go and wash in Jordan seven times;' and the fulfilment of it is expressed thus, 'Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan' (lit. baptized himself). The word baptize is used for washing after touching a dead body in the apocryphal book called Ecclesiasticus, xxxi. 25; and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls the Levitical washings divers baptisms (ix. 10). It seems clear, therefore, that this was just a different name that had come into use for these Jewish rites, and that the baptism of John was similar to them. It is thought by most of those who have investigated the subject, that immersion was the earliest form of Christian baptism, on the ground of Paul's allusion to the going down and rising up out of the water as a figure of burial and rising with Christ (Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12), and also of the statements of early Christian writers. However, in cases of sickness, pouring or sprinkling was allowed instead of immersion; but the latter continued to be the regular form for many ages, and in England till after the Reformation. Indeed, it is still

the form theoretically enjoined as preferable in the Church of England Prayer-Book, though pouring is also allowed. In France, Italy, and Germany, dipping went out of use much earlier than in England; and pouring or sprinkling had become the usual form before the Reformation. The Reformed Church of Scotland has followed the Continental practice in this matter, and recommends baptism by pouring or sprinkling as not only lawful, but sufficient and most expedient.[1]

The Form Indifferent.—But all that the Confession of Faith asserts doctrinally on the point, is that 'dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person' (chap. xxviii. sec. 3). The grounds on which this doctrine rests are these:—(1) The word baptize used by our Lord in commanding this observance does not necessarily and always mean to dip, since there are some places in the New Testament where it certainly does not mean that. In Luke xi. 38, 'washed' is literally 'been baptized;' but it is certain that it refers to washing the hands only, as appears on comparing Matt. xv. 2; Mark vii. 2, 3. So in Mark vii. 4, 'wash' is 'be baptized,' and 'washings' 'baptisms.' (2) The main idea of the word is to wash, and the precise mode of washing is not always the same. (3) Even when immersion was the ordinary practice, it was allowed that in cases of necessity baptism might be administered by pouring. (4) It is not consistent with the freedom and spirituality of the Gospel that essential importance should be attached to the mere form of a rite, when that has not been distinctly specified by our Lord in His institution of it.

The Ideal of the Rite.—On these grounds we are content with the modern form of administration, and do not think it necessary to return to the primitive mode; though we acknowledge that that

[1] Directory for Public Worship. See also the Order of Baptism in Knox's *Book of Common Order*.

is perfectly lawful, and presents a more vivid picture of the entire cleansing of the soul from sin by the Spirit of God. We ought, however, to supplement or fill up in imagination what is lacking in picturesqueness in our mode of baptizing, and to regard the rite as really setting before us a washing of the entire person. Some scope must in any case be left to the imagination, for we cannot have a literal washing performed, any more than we can have a literal and complete feast in the Lord's Supper: the sacraments were not meant to be scenic displays, but suggestive emblems of divine truth. Though we do not see it actually done before our eyes, yet we are to remember, that what is here set before us, as a symbol of the grace of Christ, is the entire washing of the whole person when one plunges into a pure and cleansing stream or pool of water. That is the way in which the rite was anciently performed; and that is its ideal which we should keep in our mind's eye, though it is not essential to the ordinance, and would probably not be so conducive to devotion and edification.

The Name of the Three-One God.—The sacred rite of washing with water, that our Lord appointed when He bade His disciples baptize, is to be unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that being the full revelation of God that Jesus had made by His life and death before He gave that command.[1] He had revealed God to His disciples as His Father and their Father, Himself as the Son of God and the Messiah anointed with the Spirit, and that Holy Spirit as another Comforter and Witness of Him; and He had re-affirmed the old faith of Israel, 'the Lord our God is one Lord,' declaring that He and the Father are one, and that the coming of the Spirit is the same as His own coming. All this He gathers up in the proclamation of the one Name of the three Agents in the work of salvation. Here we have the foundation of the Christian faith in

[1] See John xvii. 6, 26; Heb. ii. 12. The name of God is 'all that whereby He maketh Himself known,' including His 'names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.' Compare Shorter Catechism, 54, with 55 and 101.

the Three-One God, from which all the creeds and systems of theology in later days have been developed.

The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.—We do not, indeed, find mention made anywhere else in the New Testament of baptism unto the name of the Trinity. When it is specified at all, it is said to be unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of the Lord Jesus; and this has been thought by some to throw doubt on the narrative of the First Gospel. But as it is certain that the formula was used at a time before the doctrine of the Trinity, which it embodies, was fully understood or made the object of theological study, it could not have been formed by the Church's own reflection, but must have come from Christ Himself. It may be that the very words recorded in the Gospel were actually used from the first, and that the expression, 'baptized unto the name of Christ' and the like, are merely general phrases briefly indicating the same thing as the fuller form. Or it may be that the words in Matt. xxviii. 19 were not understood as prescribing a precise form, but that any expression conveying the same meaning might be used.

These the Same in Meaning.—Anyhow, it is important to observe that the two expressions mean the same thing, and that they mutually explain one another. The name of Christ does really contain that of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; for since it means the Anointed, it leads us directly to think of the Father by whom He was anointed, of the Holy Spirit with whose grace He was anointed, as well as of Himself. We are therefore, on the one hand, to look to Christ as revealing God in all His fulness and reconciling us to Him; and on the other hand, to remember that the fulness and grace of God here revealed are all in Christ. Thus baptism verifies what we saw to be the Protestant conception of a sacrament,—as representing, sealing, and applying to us nothing else and nothing less than Christ and all His benefits.

Our Relation to the Name of God.—The relation of the rite to the divine name is indicated in the words of our Lord, which should be rendered not 'in,' but 'unto the name,' etc. The meaning is, not that they who baptize act on behalf of God or by His authority, but that they bring those who are baptized into a relation to God. It corresponds to the expression in the Old Testament, 'to swear by the name of the Lord,' which in some places should rather be, 'swear to His name,' as Deut. vi. 13, x. 20; and it is illustrated by 1 Cor. i. 13, 15, where Paul asks, 'Were ye baptized unto the name of Paul?' disclaiming the idea of any of them being his instead of Christ's; and by 1 Cor. x. 2, where he says all the Israelites 'were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,' *i.e.* were brought into personal relation to him as their leader and saviour. In what sense and in what way baptism brings us into relation to the Three-One God in Christ must be learned from a consideration of its significance and use; but the phrase denotes in general, that we are made His so as to belong to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as our God, and to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

Questions.

Mention, in chronological order, the commands and examples of baptism in the New Testament.

Describe from the Pentateuch the 'divers washings' enjoined by God on Israel.

Wherein did the baptism of John and Christian baptism agree, and wherein did they differ?

What probable indications are there in the New Testament as to the form of baptism affording presumptions—(1) *in favour of immersion;* (2) *against it?*

How is Christian baptism a revelation of the name of God?

What relation to God does it indicate on the part of the baptized?

CHAPTER II.

THE THINGS SIGNIFIED BY BAPTISM.

Baptism a Washing.—The outward rite in baptism is, as we have seen, the washing with water, and by means of it the person baptized is brought into a relation to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, or more briefly, of Christ. It further appears from Scripture, that this washing symbolizes the cleansing of the soul from sin. This figure is frequently used in the Old Testament as well as in the New, *e.g.* Ps. li. 2, 7; Isa. i. 16, 18; Jer. iv. 14; Ezek. xvi. 9; and the divers washings appointed in the Levitical law embodied the same idea. In the later prophets there are promises of washing from sin as a blessing of the Messianic time, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, xxxvii. 23; Zech. xiii. 1; and it was probably to recall these promises and point to their fulfilment, that John came baptizing with water. In the New Testament the idea of cleansing from sin is connected with baptism in such passages as Acts xxii. 16; Eph. v. 26; Titus iii. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 21. This, then, is the general meaning of this sacrament as a sign. But when we unfold its teaching in detail, we find it to be much more rich and full.

Our Need of Cleansing.—It teaches, first, that all who are out of Christ are morally and spiritually unclean by reason of sin; for the passages above quoted, with their context, leave no doubt that sin is the uncleanness from which the soul needs to be washed. Now that this is the character of sin, that it is to the soul what uncleanness is to the body, foul, loathsome, unhealthy, is a most important moral truth that cannot be too deeply impressed on the mind, and that specially needs to be emphasized in the present day, when many current forms of thought regard moral evil as merely a necessary stage in the development of the

individual or of the race. Further, that all men are naturally stained with this foul pollution is the testimony of God's Word, and is re-echoed by the experience and conscience of all who honestly examine themselves.

Christ cleanses by the Spirit.—Baptism teaches, second, that just as washing in water cleanses the body, so God in Christ cleanses the soul from sin by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual cleansing that the saints prayed for and the prophets foretold, is described in the Old Testament simply as the work of God : in the New Testament we are more distinctly told that it is Christ who baptizes, who sanctifies His Church by the washing of water, and that it is by the Holy Spirit that He does so. Christ is the immediate agent, and the Holy Ghost is the cleansing element in the washing that baptism represents. Hence we see that it is not only forgiveness, or deliverance from the guilt of sin, but a thorough purging of the soul from the pollution of evil desires, evil imaginations, evil thoughts, that is meant by the baptism of the Spirit. It is equivalent to the giving a new heart and a right spirit, *i.e.* beginning a new life in the soul. The inward baptism of which the sacrament teaches is thus a new birth, a washing of regeneration, a being born of water and Spirit, *i.e.* of the Spirit working like water, cleansing the soul to newness of life. Thus, while Christian baptism bears solemn witness to the pollution of sin, and the need of all men to be cleansed from it, it also presents to our view what will meet that need most completely, the thorough washing of the soul by the Spirit that is offered in the gospel.

Through our Fellowship with His Death.—Baptism teaches, third, that this cleansing is only to be attained through fellowship with the death of Christ. This is implied in Paul's statements in Rom. vi. 3 and Col. ii. 12 ; and it also naturally follows from the symbolism of the sacrament. The giving of a new heart implies the taking away of the old heart which was hard and stony ; the

begetting of a new life implies the death of the old; for the old life of sin can only be got rid of by death. But how is this to be done? It is impossible for us by any effort or device of our own to rid ourselves of that life of sin whose wages is death. But for that very reason God has sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, that He might condemn sin in the flesh. So truly was He in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He underwent that baptism at the hands of John that was a testimony of the need of cleansing; and by the bloody baptism of His death He was freed from the sin of the world that He bore, so that rising from the dead, He became a quickening Spirit to give new life to all who enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. Our Lord's words speaking of His suffering unto death as a baptism, Mark x. 38, 39; Luke xii. 50; and Paul's saying that our baptism represents our being buried with Christ, show that this figure of descending into death with Christ and rising again with Him, is also intended in the sacrament; and thus it is that it suggests the idea of our ingrafting into Christ emphasized in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. We can only have the washing of regeneration by dying with Christ; as on the other hand, if He wash us not we have no part with Him (John xiii. 8).

Thus we become His.—Baptism teaches, fourth, that by this process of death with Christ and new birth, we become His as our Lord and our God. We are baptized unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: we are sanctified to Him as a people specially His own. He is our God, the object of our trust, love, worship, and obedience; we are His people acknowledging, serving, glorifying Him. He is thus a God to us as the Three-One Jehovah; in the person of the Father, over us, as our Father in heaven; in the person of the Son, with us, as our brother and leader; in the person of the Holy Ghost, in us, as the principle of our new life. Baptism thus testifies that the cleansing of the soul from sin, through the fellowship of the death of

Christ, is but the beginning of the new life, to be followed up by a faithful walking with God in Christ. Such a walk includes as an important part of it a walking in brotherly love with all who are Christ's; and this aspect of the sacrament is repeatedly emphasized in the New Testament. 'There is one baptism,' says Paul (Eph. iv. 5), when enumerating the motives for 'endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;' and again, 'By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body' (1 Cor. xii. 13). The real unity is effected by the inward baptism of the Spirit; we are brought near to one another by being brought near to Christ, made fellow-citizens of the saints by becoming of the household of God; made brethren one to another by becoming the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. But of this real spiritual unity the rite of baptism is a type and sign, showing us that all who profess to be Christ's receive one and the same symbolic washing, however different may be their nation, station, or character. Though some may be much more decent in outward life, or more intelligent, or more esteemed, than others, all alike need and all alike receive the same washing, and are baptized unto the same name. By baptism we are incorporated not into any local or sectional church only, but into the one holy Catholic Church of Christ, and we recognise all who have received that baptism in any of the parts or branches of the Christian Church as our brethren and fellow-Christians. Baptism is the great symbol of the unity of the Church of Christ under Him her one Head.

These are the principal things signified by the rite of baptism; and it will be observed that they are just the great fundamental truths of the gospel, and that a ceremony which so naturally and simply suggests them is a most appropriate appendage to the Word, as it proclaims to sinners the Saviour, and offers to them in Him pardon, purity, and peace through His atoning sacrifice and the renewing work of the Spirit. It is a gospel in miniature, as it were, in outward act visibly presented to the eye.

Questions.

Give passages in Scripture where sin is represented as uncleanness, and cleansing from it as washing.
Describe certain rites in the Old Testament that embodied this figure.
What does Christian baptism teach (1) *about our natural state,* (2) *about the way of salvation,* (3) *about the duty of Christians?*
Why did Christ receive the baptism of John and speak of His sufferings as a baptism?

CHAPTER III.

THE PLEDGES GIVEN IN BAPTISM.

Baptism a Seal.—The truths that are represented to us symbolically in the rite of baptism are all of the nature of divine testimonies, and the most central of them are also divine promises or offers in the gospel. We have thus in connection with them the expression of a personal mind and will on the part of God; and the ordinance that Christ has appointed expressly to represent them has also the character of a seal or token of His earnestness and good-will. There is not indeed so distinct an indication of this in our Saviour's words at the institution of baptism, as in those at the institution of the Lord's Supper; but it is evident from the way in which the use of it is described in various cases afterwards, that it had this character. When the Ethiopian eunuch, after having been instructed by Philip to recognise Jesus as the suffering Servant of Jehovah who should bear the sin of many, desired to be baptized (Acts viii. 36), it could not have been merely that he might understand the truth better, but rather that he might be assured of the certainty of the promises; and so we read that after his baptism he went on his way rejoicing, as one having a personal interest in the Saviour.

So when, at the preaching of Peter, the household of Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Spirit, the apostle directed them to be baptized, not to confer on them the new life, which they had already received, and not merely as a bare symbol, which they would not need, but as a token of the grace of God to them. Again, when Paul appeals to the rite and meaning of baptism, in a passage that is not merely an exposition of Christian truth, but an exhortation to Christian duty (Col. ii. 6–iii. 4), he plainly makes use of the sacrament, not only as a sign appealing to the mind, but as a seal or token fitted to affect the heart. We are therefore fully warranted in regarding baptism as being, like circumcision, both a sign and a seal. In fact, a symbolical observance expressly instituted by Christ, and representing the great deliverance from sin and death effected by His death for us, and realized by our entering into that death by faith, could not but have the use and effect of a seal.

A Seal of Regeneration in Christ.—Baptism is a token given by God of the actual accomplishment of that complete deliverance from sin which it represents, *i.e.* regeneration and new life through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is to be observed, that while the Bible represents baptism as specially connected with regeneration, as its sign and seal; it does not, in this connection at least, limit regeneration in that precise way that theological systems have been wont to adopt, to the first implantation of the new life in the soul. Our being dead with Christ and rising with Him implies in Paul's representation our mortifying our members upon the earth, putting off the old man, and putting on the new, a change which lasts the whole life long (Col. ii. 11, 12, iii. 5–17) So too in John's view, the being begotten of God implies complete sinlessness and even impeccability (1 John iii. 9); *i.e.*, this is realized in the full perfection and development of the life of God in the soul, and is given in principle and germ even now in the seed of God that abides in His children. What we generally call sanctification is not in the New Testament so sharply

distinguished from regeneration as it is by modern divines ; but is represented as its necessary complement and development, and often included in the name and idea. Now it is regeneration in this full and wide sense of which baptism is the seal or token. It is not a token of regeneration in the sense of the very beginning of the new life as promised by God, for in giving it He exercises His sovereign grace (John iii. 8 ; Tit. iii. 5 ; Jas. i. 18) ; neither is it a token to the individual that God has already given the new life to him, for no outward thing can be a token of inward spiritual life : the Holy Spirit of promise is the seal of that. But it is a token of the great and precious objective truth, that the whole of that complete deliverance from sin and eternal life are in Christ Jesus, that they who believe on Him receive the Spirit for all this work—yea, that God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

This wide and comprehensive sense of regeneration, which is a thoroughly Scriptural one, is that in which baptism is regarded as the seal of regeneration by the Reformed Churches. So in the exhortation before baptism in John Knox's *Book of Common Order*, it is said : 'Furthermore, it is evident that baptism was ordained to be ministered in the element of water, to teach us, that like as water outwardly doth wash away the filth of the body, so inwardly doth the virtue of Christ's blood purge our souls from the corruption and deadly poison wherewith by nature we were infected, whose venomous dregs, although they continue in this our flesh, yet by the merits of His death are not imputed unto us, because the justice (*i.e.* righteousness) of Jesus Christ is made ours by baptism ; not that we think any such virtue or power to be included in the visible water, or outward action, for many have been baptized and yet never inwardly purged : but that our Saviour Christ who commanded baptism to be ministered, will, by the power of His Holy Spirit, effectually work in the hearts of His elect, in time convenient, all that is meant and signified by the same. And this the Scripture calleth our regeneration, which standeth chiefly in these two points—in mortification, that

is to say, a resisting of the rebellious lusts of the flesh ; and in newness of life, whereby we continually strive to walk in that pureness and perfection wherewith we are clad in baptism.' Similarly in the baptismal exhortation in the Directory for Public Worship, regeneration is explained as equivalent to sanctification, and as consisting of the two parts, mortification of sin and rising to newness of life. This is also the view habitually taken by Calvin, both in his *Institutes* and in the Catechism and Liturgy of the Church of Geneva.

Need of such a Seal.—This is really the assurance that the earnest soul desires and can receive by an outward sign. Such an one may have no doubt of the truth of the general doctrine of Scripture, that God does regenerate the souls of men in order to their salvation; he may even be quite assured that God has been working in his soul new feelings, desires, and purposes; or if he is in doubt about that, he knows that the doubt must be removed not by any outward sign, but by more evidence of a divine work in the effects of it in his own soul. But knowing that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and feeling how far he is from that holiness, how great and thorough a change it needs in his character and life before he can be thus holy and perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, feeling how weak and inconstant are his efforts, and how far the needed change exceeds his own power, he longs for some guarantee that this change will be perfectly accomplished in him. Now what meets this want and craving of the soul must be something external and objective. We have it in the word and promise of the gospel, testifying that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. But this is confirmed and made more impressive to the seeking soul by the sacrament of baptism as a token of the truth and sincerity, the grace and love, of God in Jesus Christ.

Power of Baptism as such a Seal.—This is done all the more

effectually because really what baptism presents to us as the ground of our assurance is nothing else and nothing less than the death of Christ for sinners, and the love that is manifested in that great act of self-sacrifice. It is with this that the hope and possibility of our being thoroughly cleansed from sin and raised to a new life are bound up, as appears from Paul's teaching on the subject of sanctification in Rom. vi.–viii., and elsewhere. At the outset of that exposition he refers to baptism as a sign of our dying and rising with Christ as that on which the obligation and certainty of the believer's holiness rest (vi. 2–4), and throughout the following discussion he repeatedly comes back to the death of Christ as the security of our holiness and the pledge of our final salvation (vii. 4, 6, viii. 3, 32, 34). Similarly, our Lord in His discourse to His disciples in John xv. makes all His injunctions and promises about their bearing fruit by abiding in Him rest upon His great love in laying down His life for them (vers. 12–14). Now baptism is a token of that love and of all that is implied in it.

Baptism a Token of our Duty.—But it is also a token, on the other side, of our being the Lord's, as bought with His blood, and of our consequent obligation of love, loyalty, and service to Him. This is frequently and most emphatically asserted in Scripture, and if it is not expressly connected with baptism, it is necessarily implied in the statements of the blessings and privileges that are so often mentioned as connected with that ordinance. These are of such a nature as to imply a corresponding duty on our part, and that doubtless is also represented and sealed in the sacrament. By the voluntary reception or acknowledgment of the rite, we give a token of our desire and purpose to live not for ourselves but for Him who died for us and rose again, and to serve Christ by keeping His commandments and departing from iniquity. This, however, is not to be done without our first accepting the grace and love on the part of God of which baptism is the token; and therefore this aspect

of baptism, though real and important, is in its nature posterior and subordinate to the other. It is first and chiefly a pledge or token on the part of God in Christ to us; and only secondarily, though not less really, a pledge or token on our part of our allegiance to God.

Questions.

Show from Scripture that Baptism is a seal as well as a sign.
Of what promise is it a seal, and of what is the Holy Spirit a seal?
To whom does the promise of sanctification belong, and on what does it rest?
In what sense is regeneration or sanctification complete at once, and in what sense imperfect and progressive?
What pledge do we give in baptism?
Why does God's pledge to us come before our pledge to Him?

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSONS TO WHOM BAPTISM IS TO BE ADMINISTERED.

The New Testament guides us by Principles rather than Laws.— In regard to the persons to whom baptism is to be administered we find, as on many other points, a characteristic difference between the laws of the Old Testament and those of the New. In the ordinances given by God to Israel, there are exact rules laid down as to who should be circumcised, so that there never has been or can be any doubt on that point, or any difference of practice among the Jews. All children of the seed of Abraham were to be circumcised the eighth day after their birth; and all who became proselytes to the faith of Israel, were to be circumcised along with their male children. But in the New Testament we have no such precise directions about baptism, but only Christ's general command to baptize converts from all nations,

and the record of the observance of this by His first disciples. This want of precise rules is probably due partly to the fact that the new dispensation rests upon and is explained by the old, and partly to this, that Christ would have His people guided rather by principles than by precise rules. It has had the effect that there are differences of opinion and practice among Christians as to the persons to whom baptism is to be administered; but it has also led to more thought being given to the meaning of the rite than the Jews give to that of circumcision, when they were saved the trouble of reflection by the exact rules of the law.

The express Command insufficient. — What is expressly commanded by Christ in regard to baptism is, that those who are made disciples by the preaching of the gospel should be baptized, *i.e.* those who had been heathens or unbelieving Jews, but had come to believe in Jesus. These only are referred to in Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15, 16; and in all the instances in which baptism is said to have been administered, it was to such persons. There is no express precept or example as to what was to be done in the case of those who, being born of believing parents, would be taught from their earliest infancy the truths about Jesus, and trained to look to Him with reverence, trust, and love. There would be few or none such at first, but ere long they would become and continue to be a large number.

Different Practices as to the Children of Believers.—Now in regard to such children of believers, three possible courses might be adopted, and have in reality been advocated.

(1) It might be said, that they need not and should not be baptized at all; and this indeed has been the opinion of some though of comparatively few Christians.[1] This would be to follow most literally the express commands of Scripture, and refuse to go beyond them. Children trained up in the Christian faith are

[1] This view is expressed by F. Socinus, though he and his followers did not practically carry it out.

not among those of whom Jesus expressly spoke in commanding baptism; nor is there any record in the New Testament of any such being baptized.

(2) It might be said, that they ought to be baptized when they are able and willing intelligently to profess their faith in Christ; and this has been and is the opinion and practice of a larger number of Christians than the former.[1]

(3) It might be said, that they ought to be baptized in infancy as soon after their birth as convenient; and this has been and is the opinion and practice of much the largest number of Christians.[2]

We cannot decide between these three views by a mere consideration, however careful, of the New Testament precepts and examples by themselves; for though the first of them certainly has the advantage, if such it be, of adhering most strictly to their express teaching, yet it is only founded on the negative argument from silence, and is counterbalanced by the fact that throughout the New Testament baptism is referred to as a rite which all believers in Christ, and not merely some of them, had received. As far as express and positive command or example is concerned, it may be said that all the three opinions stand very much on an equality.

The Meaning of Baptism decides between them.—But baptism is not a meaningless or magical rite, but a significant sign and token: and we may judge between these different opinions by considering what, in view of the meaning of baptism, would be the import and teaching of each of the three practices. If the first were adopted, and the children of Christian parents were recognised as Christians without any baptism at all; it would imply and teach, that the cleansing from sin and regeneration to

[1] Those who are called Baptists.

[2] This is mentioned simply as a fact, not as affording by itself any evidence of the correctness of the opinion and practice; for a majority of professing Christians can be appealed to as holding many things which we believe to be utterly erroneous.

new life that are symbolized in baptism are not needed by the children of believing parents; that the new life that their parents received of the Spirit is transmitted to them by natural generation; and that they are not born with a corrupt nature. This, however, is flatly contradicted by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching and Christian experience, more particularly by the words of Jesus to Nicodemus (John iii. 3–8), in which He solemnly declares the absolute necessity of the new birth for every one who shall enter the kingdom of God. Now, as we cannot believe that Christ intended His Church to observe a practice that would give the lie to these momentous truths, we must conclude that He meant that not only converts from unbelief or heathenism, but children brought up by believing parents should be baptized. The two other opinions agree in this, but differ as to the time when baptism should be administered to them.

The meaning and teaching of the second form of practice would be, that all who are brought up in the faith of Christ still need, when they come to years of intelligence, that great and entire change of heart and life that is symbolized in baptism. But is that true? Does not the Bible teach that a child may be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb (Luke. i. 15), that little children are in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xix. 14, and parallels), and that Jesus has lambs as well as sheep in His flock (John xxi. 15)? This is also borne out by experience. Many a one has come gradually and unconsciously under the influence of the truth; and spiritual thoughts and feelings and desires have grown up in the soul, fed and nurtured by the teaching and example and prayers of Christian parents; so that he has been led by a way that he knows not to faith in Christ. The arrival at a stage of understanding to be able to profess faith in Christ, is indeed an important epoch in the life of such a one; but does it at all correspond to what is signified by the sacrament of baptism? Surely it is a mistake to lead such a one to think that the dawn of his intelligence, enabling him consciously to exercise that new life that had been gradually growing in him, is itself

the new birth of that life. Again, this practice, if it means anything, teaches that there can be no regeneration where there is not conscious and intelligent faith. But as Scripture plainly teaches that without regeneration there can be no salvation, the practice of baptizing the children of Christian parents only when they can profess their faith, implies that infants cannot be saved.[1]

Since, then, both of these courses would make the Church's practice as to baptism teach things directly opposed to Scripture, we are led to consider whether the third course is open to any similar objection. It is indeed alleged that to baptize all the children of believing parents implies that they all are or shall be regenerate: but this objection rests upon the erroneous assumption that baptism is a sign or seal of the personal salvation of those who receive it. It no more implies that all the children of believers are saved, than it does that all professing Christians are really such. Again, it is said that infants cannot give evidence of being born again; but it is certain that they may be regenerate, and the fact of their being brought up by Christian parents affords some presumption that they are or will be. The administration of baptism to them, teaches that they no less than others need to be born again, that they may be born again even from their earliest days, that this is of the free grace of God to them as well as to adults, and that He may be expected graciously to hear the prayers and bless the Christian training of their parents by regenerating the children in infancy. These are all scriptural truths; and no other arrangement in regard to baptism would suggest them all so naturally as the baptism of the children of professing Christians in their infancy.

Confirmations of this Decision.—This practice, which the meaning

[1] Undoubtedly Baptists do not believe this, but our argument is that the meaning of their practice in regard to believers' children contracted their own belief. All the arguments against the baptism of infants would apply equally against the salvation of infants, and we may ask with Peter: 'Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, who received the Holy Ghost as well as we?'

of the sacrament suggests as the most appropriate of the possible courses to be followed, is confirmed by the fact that from the time of Abraham onward the children of God's people had been recognised by Him as included in His covenant, and had received the sign and seal of circumcision, to which baptism is represented as analogous. There is no indication that our Lord intended to withdraw the recognition from them, but, on the contrary, His gracious reception of them when His disciples desired to keep them back from Him, and the Apostle Paul's declaration, that the children of believers are holy (1 Cor. vii. 14), lead us to the conclusion that Jesus meant rather to continue and confirm their privilege as belonging to His Church and entitled to the sign and seal of ingrafting into Him. Also the fact that the practice of infant baptism can be traced back in the history of the Church to a time not long after the apostolic age, leads to the belief that it was the custom among Christians from the beginning, and so had the sanction of the apostles of the Lord.

Profession and Duties of Parents.—It is to be observed, that on this view of the grounds of the baptism of the infant children of Christians, they receive this ordinance as one to which they have themselves a right in virtue of their birth in Christian families, not in virtue of a profession of faith made by their parents or sponsors in their name. The parent, indeed, who presents his child for baptism does so as a believer in Christ; but he makes no vicarious profession of faith, nor does he enter into a covenant in the name of the child. He professes his own faith, and promises faithful performance of his own duty as a Christian parent to bring up his children for the Lord. This promise is really involved in the general profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him, that is implied in being a member of the Church of Christ. The parent does not come in as a surety between the Saviour and his child; the Lord deals directly with the child, by giving to him the seal of His promises of grace as addressed to him, and laying him under the solemn obligations of the cove-

nant. The parent's duty is indeed most important, and his obligation to it most solemn ; but it is not the duty of answering for his children or undertaking obligations in their name, but of discharging his own part, teaching them the meaning of baptism and the blessed promises of which it is a token, and seeking to lead them by all the persuasive and powerful means of parental training, influences, and example to receive the grace of God in Christ and walk in it. Their receiving baptism in infancy indicates that it is God's design in general that the children of Christians should be Christians themselves ; that He makes provision for this, and will not be wanting on His part : and if this fails to be realized, the presumption is that there has been some unfaithfulness or shortcoming on the part of the parents, or great guilt on the part of the children. So true and scriptural is this principle, that it is interesting to observe that John Bunyan in his immortal allegory, though he was a Baptist, yet recognises the general principle that other evangelical Christians regard as involved in the baptism of the infant children of believers. When Christian comes to the house Beautiful, which represents the Church visible, he is examined by Piety, Prudence, and Charity as to his fitness ; and after the two former had questioned him, ' Then said Charity to Christian, Have you a family ? Are you a married man ? *Christian*—I have a wife and four small children. *Charity*—And why did you not bring them along with you ? Then Christian wept and said, O how willingly would I have done it, but they were all of them utterly averse to my going on pilgrimage.' Then follows a further conversation on this subject ; and he is not admitted till he has shown that he has done all that he could to induce them to come with him. This is a very beautiful illustration of the principle that when a man becomes a Christian, he ought to bring all his family with him. This was required in the Old Testament in connection with the ordinance of circumcision, for it is said in the law of the Passover (Ex. xii. 48), ' And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circum-

cised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.' This was the principle of infant circumcision in the Jewish economy, and on the same principle we believe the apostles of our Lord to have acted, teaching, as Bunyan does, that when men become Christians, they ought to bring their families with them. As Jews, accustomed to the receiving of proselytes by their being not only circumcised themselves, but having their children circumcised also, the apostles would probably understand our Lord's command to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them, as meant to be fulfilled in the same way: and this is confirmed by the repeated mention in the history and epistles of the baptism of households as such, Acts xvi. 15, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16. The practice that we follow might indeed be more appropriately described as household baptism than as infant baptism. Its principle is, that the families of professing Christians are to be Christian families. As Jonathan Edwards puts it, 'Every Christian family ought to be, as it were, a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by His rules. And family education and order are some of the chief of the means of grace. If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace are likely to prosper and be successful.'[1] That baptism was used as the appointed symbol and seal of believers' families being thus Christian, seems to be a natural inference from the fact of families as such being baptized. On all these grounds there appears to be a good foundation for the doctrine of our Church on this subject: 'Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him, but the infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized.'

[1] Farewell Sermon, *Works*, i. p. ccxlviii., ed. 1834.

QUESTIONS.

Explain the difference between teaching by rules and by principles as exemplified in the Old and New Testament respectively.
In what cases is baptism expressly commanded in the New Testament, and in what case is there no express command or example?
What courses are possible in regard to the latter case, and how does the meaning of the sacraments decide between these courses?
What confirmations are there of the course thus indicated?
Are sponsors necessary in infant baptism? Are parents to be regarded as such?
What profession do parents make, and what obligations do they acknowledge in connection with the baptism of their children?

CHAPTER V.

THE EFFICACY OF BAPTISM.

In the Case of actual Believers.—It is the belief of all Christians, and well founded in the Word of God, that the washing with water in baptism represents the cleansing of the soul from sin by fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, or as it is sometimes expressed, that regeneration or renewal is the inward part of this sacrament, *i.e.* the spiritual grace corresponding to the visible sign. It is also agreed by all, that when the sacrament is rightly used, the inward and spiritual grace is present as well as the outward and visible sign. As Calvin was wont to put it, God does not delude us with vain and empty shows, but really bestows what he signifies and seals in the sacrament. Both Romanists and Protestants are agreed in this; but they differ as to what is required for the right use of the sacrament; the former, in accordance with the magical theory of the Middle Ages, hold that it is simply the correct observance of the ceremony, and not putting an obstacle in the way of the efficacy of

the sacrament ; the latter, in accordance with the great Reformation principle of justification by faith, maintain that the sacrament is then only rightly used when the receiver exercises faith, and that then and then only it is accompanied with regeneration. Both Lutherans and Calvinists agree, that where there is no faith baptism has no efficacy, and that wherever there is faith, there is regeneration. The differences between these branches of the Protestant Church, and even those between them both and the more spiritual members of the Church of Rome, have been greatly exaggerated by varying uses of words, and by vague and confused expressions.

We have already seen in what way and in what sense the sacraments in general are means of grace, not only representing and sealing, but applying to those who rightly use them, Christ and all the benefits of the covenant of grace. They are made effectual for this end, according to the doctrine common to all Protestants, by the working of the Spirit through faith on our part; and whether they are to be conceived as merely moral causes (Zwinglian view), or instrumental causes (Lutheran view), or occasional causes (Calvinian view), are questions of a recondite and subordinate nature, since on any of these views they may be held to be really means of grace. There is no great difficulty in believing, that when one who has just come to faith in Christ receives an ordinance so full of meaning and tenderness as Christian baptism, his faith is strengthened, and he is enabled by it to enter into closer fellowship with Christ. We can even say that he receives regeneration by it, if that term be understood not in the limited sense in which it must precede faith, but in the broad application to renewal in general. His faith is really strengthened, and thereby his heart is increasingly purified and his victory over the world enlarged.

In the Case of Infants.—But there is a peculiar difficulty in explaining the efficacy of baptism in the case of infants ; and the scriptural requirement of faith for the right and profitable

reception of the sacrament is the strongest objection against the practice of infant baptism. If we cannot show that baptism can be a means of grace to those to whom it is administered in infancy, and that in accordance with the general principles of Protestant theology on this subject; it will be very difficult to believe that our Lord or His apostles intended any but adults to be baptized. Accordingly, those who practise the baptism of infants of believers have generally felt it needful to attempt some explanation of the use of baptism to them. There have been various different principles adopted for this purpose, to which it is not needful to refer; but that employed by the Westminster divines is expressed in the following words, Confession of Faith, chap. xxviii. sec. 6 :—'The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.' Two things are here stated. On the one hand, that as it had been said in the preceding section that grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to the rite of baptism that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated; so also, even when both the outward rite and the inward blessing are received, the one is not so tied to the other that they must be received at the same time. The Protestant doctrine of the efficacy of baptism, as held by the Westminster divines, does not imply that, even in cases in which baptism is not only valid but effectual, its effect must take place at once. But on the other hand, in such cases the grace is as really connected with the sacrament, and bestowed by means of it, as if it had been given at the very moment of its administration.

Infant Baptism effectual as a Sign to the Growing Child.—It is plain that a child under the age of understanding can derive no

immediate benefit from baptism as a sign of Christ and His salvation. The sacrament as a sign appeals to the mind; and while the intellectual faculties are as yet unawakened and undeveloped, it cannot be understood, and so cannot enlighten or instruct. But does it follow from this that the sign can be of no use at any time to the child? The mind to which it is designed to appeal is there, though as yet undeveloped; and none can tell at what precise time the latent consciousness is awakened, and the child begins to understand something of the meaning of surrounding things. The child sees the ordinance of baptism administered to others, and is told by parents of its having been administered to himself. He is taught what it means, and at the early age of dawning intelligence is especially helped by having the spiritual truth clothed in the garb of visible and familiar figure; while the express institution and solemn performance of the ordinance serve to show the importance of the truth, and bring it home to the impressible soul of youth as a divine testimony to the need, the possibility, and the promise of the soul's cleansing by the new birth in Christ. Surely, too, by seeing it administered to infants, and being told that he was baptized in infancy, he learns in a most suitable and impressive way that even the youngest need and may receive this divine cleansing. Thus the sacrament is of real use to him even as a sign, though that use is not possible at the moment of time when it is administered.

Its similar Effect as a Seal.—Even more really does this principle apply to the use of baptism as a seal or token of God's grace and love in Christ. In this respect also, it appeals to mental and spiritual faculties that are undeveloped in infancy, the affections of trust, love, and gratitude for the blessings of redemption. But just as its meaning as a sign can be unfolded to the opening mind of the child, so, and even more simply, can its value as a token of love be brought home to his heart. In this way tokens of earthly affection come to be appreciated by children, and are

of use though given in infancy. A child receives when an infant a gift from some loving friend, a Bible for example. It is of no immediate use to him; he can neither receive its teaching nor appreciate the love that bestowed the gift; it will be many years before he can read the Bible so as to learn its lessons of divine truth; and it will be some time, though not so long, before he can understand that the book is a gift of love, a keepsake to be valued on account of the giver and his affection. But the child can ere long understand and feel this, and he will feel the love of the giver all the more because the gift was bestowed so long before he could value or use it. Instead of taking away from the preciousness or power of the gift as a token of love, does it not greatly enhance it to know that it was not kept till the time when it could be understood, but given long years before, at the very earliest time possible? So it is with the sacrament of Baptism. It is all the more precious and useful as a seal of God's covenant, a token of His love, because it is given from earliest infancy: it testifies of a love that has met us at the very outset of our life, of a Saviour who has been waiting and ready to receive us ever since we had a being. In this way it really benefits the soul of the receiver, though given in unconscious infancy, and benefits him all the more as a seal of God's grace just because it has been given in infancy, its efficacy not being tied to the moment of time when it is administered.

Its Effect as a Means of Grace to Infants.—Now if thus infant baptism can be really a sign and seal of Christ and all His benefits to those who have received it, when they come to be capable of faith; we need not hesitate to say that it is also a means of grace to those who believe. Its power of instructing the mind and affecting the heart serves to strengthen and increase faith, and so to promote the soul's union to Christ and conformity to His character. The Holy Spirit also uses the sacrament as well as the Word, and by means of it works upon the soul just as really when it has been administered in the past days of uncon-

scious infancy as when it is administered at the very time when faith is exercised. The opening heart and affections of a child recognise the meaning and value of a keepsake given in infancy; and it serves to cherish and strengthen those affections to which it appeals, and thus becomes a means of the heart's education and perfecting. So the tokens of God's love in Christ, bestowed on the children of His people in infancy, meet the awakening religious feelings in their souls, become to them significant and precious, and in turn strengthen and develop these feelings. Only, these tokens of divine love have this advantage over any human keepsakes, that the Giver is Himself present with them by His Spirit to the spirits of His children, shedding abroad His love in their hearts by His direct and mysterious, yet real and powerful agency. When the Spirit of God thus works in the heart of one who has been baptized in infancy, adding to the moral influence that the knowledge of this has in enlightening the mind and impressing the heart, His direct sanctifying agency purifying the heart through faith, then it may be said that by the sacrament spiritual blessings are not only represented and sealed, but also exhibited or applied to the believing soul.

Questions.

When is the spiritual blessing connected with the outward sign in baptism, and when not?

On what principle is infant baptism of use to those who cannot believe when they receive it?

How is it of special value because given in infancy? as a sign? as a seal?

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF BAPTISM.

Baptism must be used aright.—We have seen that, according to the scriptural doctrine, the efficacy of baptism as a means of grace depends upon the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who use it in faith. It depends on moral and spiritual conditions, not upon mere form and ceremonial. These conditions on our part may be, and usually are, expressed briefly in one word, faith; that is the indispensable and all-sufficient requisite for a blessing through the ordinance. But for practical purposes it is desirable not to rest content with this brief statement, which is doctrinally accurate enough, but to expand it into details, and show how faith is practically to exert itself in connection with baptism. The Westminster divines, in their Larger Catechism (167), indicate that the duty of improving (*i.e.* using for practical ends) our baptism, though needful, is much neglected; and if that was true then, it must be much more so now, when, it is to be feared, there is not so much time and thought given to religious duties as in their days. They also state that this duty is not restricted to the time of receiving baptism, but is one that extends through the whole time of life. This appears from the appeals that the apostles frequently make in their epistles to the meaning and value of baptism as a motive to Christian duty or encouragement. There are also mentioned two sorts of occasions when this duty of making practical use of our baptism is specially incumbent.

Especially (1) in Temptation.—One is in the time of temptation. For this ordinance, being a help to faith and Christian life, is especially needful and seasonable when these are assailed and endangered, whether by the allurements or by the threatenings

of the outer world. The soldier should use his arms and weapons especially when he is attacked or surprised by the enemy. So our Lord's baptism immediately preceded His temptation in the wilderness. That assault of evil was inevitable, when He began His public ministry as the Messiah; but He was prepared for it and strengthened to resist it by previously receiving the baptism of John. So, too, when Paul is guarding the believers at Rome against the great practical snare of evil, to think that we may continue in sin because grace abounds, he reminds them of what is meant and implied in their baptism (Rom. vi. 1–4); and when he exhorts Timothy, in view of the many temptations of the world, to fight the good fight of faith, he reminds him how he has witnessed the good confession before many witnesses (1 Tim. vi. 12), referring most probably to his baptism.

(2) **At its Administration to Others.**—The other occasion is when we are present at the administration of baptism to others; for then the symbol and seal that we have ourselves received is actually set anew before our eyes; and we ought to use it as a means of grace to ourselves. The administration of the sacrament does not merely concern the children to be baptized, or the parents who present them, but the whole baptized Church of Christ there present. This is too often forgotten, even by ministers, as well as by the people, and our baptismal service too much limited, as is that of the Church of England, to a reference to the infants and those who present them. But the Order of the Church of Scotland, as of the Reformed Churches in general, distinctly requires that regard be had in the administration of baptism to its use as a means of grace to all present who have previously received it. The Directory for the Public Worship of God says that after the minister has explained the institution, nature, use, and ends of the sacrament, 'he is also to admonish all that are present, to look back to their baptism; to repent of their sins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make right use of their baptism, and of the

covenant sealed thereby betwixt God and their souls.' And in the *Book of Common Order* there is the following exhortation :— 'Wherefore, dearly beloved, it is not only of necessity that we be once baptized, but also it much profiteth oft to be present at the ministration thereof, that we (being put in mind of the league and covenant made between God and us, that He will be our God and we His people, He our Father and we His children) may have occasion as well to try our lives past as our present conversation, and to prove ourselves whether we stand fast in the faith of God's elect, or contrariwise have strayed from Him through incredulity and ungodly living, whereof if our consciences do accuse us, yet by hearing the loving promises of our heavenly Father, who calleth all men to mercy, by repentance, we may from henceforth walk more warily in our vocation.' An exhortation of this sort ought never to be omitted in the administration of baptism.

Means. — **(1) Reflection.** — The first thing necessary for this important duty of using our baptism is serious consideration of the meaning and purpose of the ordinance. Just as those who unworthily receive the Lord's Supper are blamed by Paul for not discerning the Lord's body, *i.e.* not understanding the spiritual meaning of the sacrament ; so we lose the benefit of baptism, if we merely regard it as a solemn and impressive service, to which we attach only some vague ideas of dedication to God, without understanding more definitely what it means and teaches. Thus we find Paul frequently appealing to baptism as teaching truths that those whom he addressed seemed not to know or to have forgotten, *e.g.* the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts xix. 3–6); the unity of the Church (1 Cor. i. 13); the necessity of holiness (Rom. vi. 3, 4). The ordinance, as we have already seen, is full of most precious meaning ; but unless that is understood it will be like a book written in an unknown tongue ; and unless it is frequently considered and habitually meditated upon, it will be like a book that is unread and neglected. There should be

careful, reverent, and thankful thought upon the meaning of baptism, for which we have sure guides and helps in those numerous passages in the Bible that refer to it in various ways: the mind should be made familiar with the nature and connection of the several truths taught in the ordinance, so that, when there is occasion, these profitable subjects of meditation may readily occur to our minds in their scriptural form and order. Further, we should consider these truths in a personal manner. It is not merely the meaning of baptism in the abstract, but of our own baptism on which we are to meditate. We are to consider its teaching as addressed to us, its offer of Christ and His benefits as made to us, its obligations as laid upon us, its promises as set before us, each one for ourselves. So will the ordinance promote and stimulate personal religious thought, and give occasion to what is greatly needed for spiritual life, the mind being much occupied with holy and profitable subjects of consideration.

(2) Repentance.—But such earnest thought will naturally lead to a second kind of exercise of soul, that of humiliation and repentance for our shortcomings and sins. The figure of baptism is itself a humbling one, for it implies uncleanness; and the acceptance and use of it implies a confession of uncleanness and unfitness in our natural state for the kingdom of God. Hence, not only by John the Baptist but by the apostles of Christ, repentance is joined with baptism as an exercise of soul necessary for its right observance (Acts ii. 38). As often as we recall our baptism, we recall our original state, and that is fitted to humble us and calls for continual repentance; since the remains of that corruption continue even in the children of God as long as they are in this life. Thus, while the Christian does not forget that he was purged from his old sins (2 Pet. i. 9), that he is washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. vi. 11), he must ever remember, that if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, and that we need the gracious assurance, that not

once only, but now and always, as a present blessing, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin (1 John i. 7, 8). Further, since the symbolism of baptism teaches us that God offers us complete and thorough cleansing from sin in Christ, if we would but receive Him by faith, and that 'whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not' (1 John ii. 6), we are convinced that the remaining of sin in us is due to our unbelief, to our falling short of and walking contrary to the grace of baptism, instead of laying hold of it and abiding in Christ as offered to us in the Word and sacrament. We might have been perfectly holy, had we only had constant faith in Christ; and our sin is not merely that we have naturally corrupt and sinful hearts, but that even when there has been brought within our reach a Saviour that could perfectly renew them, and would do so had we been willing, we have still failed of that renewal, and even sometimes gone back from past attainments and fallen from first love. What is so fitted to produce a deep feeling of self-abasement as the sacrament that implies these solemn truths?

(3) **Faith.**—The sorrow, however, that is thus produced must not spend itself in idle tears in thinking of the days that are no more. The call to repentance is to do the first works; the rite that tells us how the Saviour would have washed us perfectly clean long ago, had we been but willing to give up all our bosom sins, tells us also that He is still present, still loving, still longing to wash us perfectly clean even now. Let there be faith then in lively exercise, laying hold of the offers and promises of the gospel; let us now grasp the forgiveness of our past sins as sealed to us ever anew in the sacrament; let us regard our baptism as being to us what circumcision was to Abraham, 'a seal of the righteousness of faith,' so shall it help our faith to grow up into that full assurance that that father of the faithful attained 'who against hope believed in hope . . . And being not weak in faith . . . he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully per-

suaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform' (Rom. iv. 11, 18–20). This sacrament, rightly used, is one of the means by which faith, that may at first be weak and trembling, and able only to say, 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!' may grow up to full assurance of God's grace and love in Christ Jesus. By faith also, in this sacrament, we are to receive out of the fulness of Christ all spiritual blessings, not merely the sense of pardon and peace of conscience, but light to guide us in the path of duty, gratitude and love to move us to walk in that path, wisdom to enable us to detect the snares of the adversary, strength to overcome difficulties, courage to face danger, patience to bear suffering, hope to cheer and encourage us, and joy to fill our hearts and our mouths with the new song of praise to our God. All these blessings are promised and bestowed in Christ, and are sealed to believers by the sacrament of baptism; by faith, then, we are to use it as a help for the attainment of them all.

(4) **Holy Resolutions.**—Once more, for the right use of baptism, this faith must act in the way of earnest resolution and effort to depart from all iniquity. For the sacrament is a token of duty on our part, as well as of promise on God's part. We are to bring forth fruits of repentance, we are baptized unto the name of Christ, and so are bound to be His, separate from an ungodly world, and living for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. This duty is to be accepted by us with gladness and alacrity, not merely recognised as incumbent on us, and submitted to as imperative and necessary, but joyfully embraced and cheerfully done. This we can do by God's grace, through recognising the other truths and promises represented and sealed to us in baptism. By it we not only bind ourselves, but also strengthen and encourage ourselves, to all the duties of a Christian life and walk. It is important to recognise the solemn obligation that baptism declares and seals as lying upon us, and to allow this to affect our hearts and influence our conduct. But if it be regarded as merely laying an obligation on us, this may tend to produce in

practice a legal frame of mind, or to depress the Christian's experience unduly to that of a mere servant. It is necessary, therefore, always to connect the baptismal obligation with the baptismal testimony of the great redemption in Christ, and the baptismal promises of spiritual blessings to the believer. Viewed thus, it seals to him his Christian duty not as a bare obligation, but as an obligation joyfully accepted and heartily entered into, because it is just the other side, as it were, of the salvation sealed in the sacrament: 'That He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life' (Luke i. 74, 75). As a seal of this promise, the rite of baptism not only impresses us with a sense of our obligation to a holy life, but also imparts strength to us to discharge that duty. It is to the Christian what the colours are to the soldier, a symbol of the King and the cause that he serves, not simply reminding him of his duty, but quickening his loyalty and inspiring him with courage and high hope. As the soldier, looking to the colours as they flutter at the head of his column, is nerved to stronger, braver, more resolute effort and endurance, and is really helped to fight and conquer by the courage and patriotism that symbol of his country inspires; so the Christian, looking to the sacrament of baptism, the symbol of Christ's salvation, may derive from it holy resolution to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold of eternal life. But just as the flag to an ignorant or unpatriotic eye is a mere rag of silk, and has no animating influence except to those who understand and appreciate what it symbolizes; so our Christian baptism will be a mere empty form, meaningless and powerless, unless we intelligently and believingly use it in the ways that the Bible and the nature of the case point out.

Questions.

Explain Larger Catechism, 167, *in its several parts, and give additional proofs from Scripture.*

Which of the exercises of soul there described are exemplified in Ps. li.?

Which in 1 *John i.* 1–*ii.* 6?

How may we profit by being spectators of baptism?

How does the thought of our baptism humble us, and how encourage us?

PART III.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

CHAP. I. The Lord's Supper: Its Institution and Form.

II. The Things represented in the Lord's Supper.

III. The Pledges given in the Lord's Supper.

IV. The Persons for whom the Lord's Supper is designed.

V. The Efficacy of the Lord's Supper.

VI. The Practical Use of the Lord's Supper.

PART III.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: ITS INSTITUTION AND FORM.

Names applied to it. — This sacrament has a greater number of designations than the other both in Scripture and in the customary language of Christians. It is called in Scripture the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 20), the Lord's table (1 Cor. x. 21), the breaking of bread (Acts ii. 42, xx. 7). It is also often called the Communion, that name being taken from 1 Cor. x. 16, and the Eucharist or thanksgiving, from the solemn giving of thanks that forms an important part of the observance. Of the same import as this last is the name 'the action' given to it in the Westminster Directory for Public Worship. For that is taken from the Latin phrase *actio gratiarum*, the giving of thanks, and so means the same as eucharist, which is from the Greek. The name action, however, is obsolete, and only survives in the Scottish term action-sermon applied to the discourse before the communion. These names are all scriptural and appropriate. That of 'sacrament of the altar,' though used by Lutherans, is unscriptural and misleading, and still more so is the Roman Catholic term 'mass.'

Christ's Institution our Directory.—The institution of the Lord's

Supper is narrated with considerable detail by the first three evangelists, Matt. xxvi. 26–29; Mark xiv. 22–25; Luke xxii. 19, 20; and also, in close accordance with Luke's account, by Paul, when he had occasion to give the Corinthian Christians instructions in regard to the way of observing it (1 Cor. xi. 23–25). This last passage shows not only that this ordinance was designed to be, and actually was, permanently observed in the Church, but also that the narrative of its first observance by our Lord and His disciples was intended to be our guide and directory as to the right way of keeping it. It was instituted by Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed, and which immediately preceded the day of His death. This was at the season of the Jews' Passover, the annual feast kept in remembrance of the redemption of the people from the bondage of Egypt; when the thoughts of all pious Israelites would be directed to that great event, and the wondrous deliverance that God had then wrought for the nation. It is not quite certain whether the last supper of our Lord and His disciples was on the very day when the Paschal feast was observed by the Jews, or on the evening before it; but whatever may be the exact truth as to this, it is clear that our Lord and His disciples regarded the Passover of Israel as foreshadowing the redemption of the world by His death, which is commemorated and sealed in the Lord's Supper (Luke xxii. 16; John xix. 36; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8). There is therefore a close connection in nature and meaning between the Passover meal in the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper in the New. The Christian ordinance, however, was not designed to take the place of the Jewish one as an annual celebration. The Passover was only to be kept once a year, on the exact anniversary of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the fourteenth day of the first month, Abib or Nisan. The Lord's Supper was indeed first instituted and observed either on that day or on the preceding one; but Jesus gave no directions for a special time for its observance in after ages, either annually or at any fixed seasons; and his disciples, acting doubtless according to the intention of His command,

observed it much more frequently than the Jews did the Passover. They were wont to come together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts xx. 7); and in the early days of their first love they seem to have done so daily (Acts ii. 46). In this respect, therefore, the Lord's Supper is not like the Passover. As an annual festival that ordinance pointed forward to the one great sacrifice of Christ once for all; and now that Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us, we are permitted at any time, and on any day, to observe the simple ordinance that commemorates His death. This is one part of the freedom of the New Testament Church, to be delivered from the necessity of observing days, and months, and times, and years, the elements of the world to which the children of God, while yet under age, had to be subject (Gal. iv. 1–10).

Freedom allowed in regard to Details.—It also belongs to the liberty of Christianity that Jesus gave no minute and specific instructions as to the forms and rites to be observed in the Lord's Supper, such as God gave to Israel about the Passover. Those who attach vital importance to the exact observance of outward rites and ceremonies, as the Church of Rome does, think that the absence of prescriptions about these in Scripture is a defect, which must have been supplied by traditional instructions from the apostles; and seek to find more detailed directions in what is supposed to have been handed down by oral communication in the Church. But those who hold the Protestant principle, that the written Word of God alone is the sure and sufficient directory for the Church's worship and duty, see in the absence of particular rules as to the form and manner of observing the ordinance an indication that our Lord intended to leave His people at liberty in regard to such details, these being not essential to the meaning or profit of the service. What kind of bread and wine are to be used, in what place or relative positions and postures the givers and receivers are to set themselves, and in what particular form and time the sacred actions are to be per-

formed, are matters that cannot be certainly determined from Scripture; and are therefore to be decided by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general principles laid down in the Word of God (Confession of Faith, ch. i. sec. 6).

Paul's Warning against early Abuses.—It would appear that in the early Church the Supper was kept in the form simply of a common meal, associated or identified with what were called 'agapae,' *i.e.* love-feasts,[1] at which the believers in Christ met together to partake of their food in common, with praise and thanks to God not only for the blessings of creation and providence, but above all for the redemption of Christ. These love-feasts, however, in course of time became liable to abuses, and were apt to be regarded as mere expressions of brotherly love and fellowship, apart from any deeper meaning or more spiritual benefit. Then smaller sets and coteries began to be formed among those who should be all one body; and there was a danger even of the excess incident to an ordinary feast being found in the Christian feast of love. These abuses and dangers were specially apparent in the Church formed in the wealthy and luxurious city of Corinth; and Paul devotes a weighty paragraph of his first epistle to that Church to the exposure and correction of them, 1 Cor. xi. 17–34. He first blames their breaking up into separate parties or sets, even in the feast of common love (vers. 17–19); then he goes on to what gave occasion to that,—their regarding the Lord's Supper simply as an ordinary feast of the assembled Church,—and delicately hints at the possibility, on that view, of even grosser sensual abuses (vers. 20–22). Then, in order to correct this, he rehearses the history of the institution of the Lord's Supper (vers. 23–25); and draws from it the inference that the ordinance is one that has a deep spiritual significance, and can only be rightly observed by those who recognise this and are able to enter into it (vers. 26–32).

[1] These love-feasts are mentioned in Jude 12; and perhaps, also, in the parallel passage 2 Pet. ii. 13, where, however, the reading is doubtful.

Finally, after thus impressing on them how each one personally should be prepared to observe it, he gives directions as to the practice of the Church, that all their meals for satisfying their wants should be at home, and the Lord's Supper a purely symbolical feast (vers. 33, 34).

Instructions afforded by this.—This passage may be said to be the inspired directory for the observance of the Lord's Supper; and from it we gather the following as the chief points to be attended to in regard to the form of this service:—

1. The elements or material signs are to be bread and wine; and there is no specific direction as to any particular kind of either to be used. The uncertainty whether our Lord's last supper with His disciples was on the Passover evening, or on the preceding one, makes it impossible to be sure whether they used unleavened or leavened bread; and the wine is described merely as 'the cup,' 'the fruit of the vine.' Christ clearly used, as the symbols in this ordinance, simply the bread and wine that happened to be before Him at the time, and we best follow His example by taking those that are in common use.

2. The partaking of the elements is to be preceded by blessing and thanksgiving to God after the example of Jesus. By this the bread and wine are sanctified, *i.e.* set apart from their common use for bodily nourishment to the religious purpose of symbolizing spiritual things and strengthening our soul's life.

3. The bread is to be broken, and it along with the cup to be given to the communicants, who are each to eat and drink of them. It is most natural and seemly that they should receive them in their hands, and not directly in their mouths; and as all meet as brethren on an equal footing, that they should give them one to another, and receive them one from another as well as from the officiating minister.[1] That this may often be more than a suitable symbol, even a means of special spiritual good, appears

[1] The Church of Rome denies the cup to the laity; but this is an unwarranted curtailing of the privileges of Christ's people, and deprives them

from a statement of Zwingli, who first introduced this manner of communicating at the time of the Reformation. In giving an account, in a document addressed to the King of France, of the manner of observing the Lord's Supper at Zurich, he says:— 'The office-bearers carry round unleavened bread, and each receives with his hand a piece of the bread offered him, and then hands the rest to his neighbour; and if any one does not wish to touch the bread with his hand, then the office-bearer who hands it round gives it to him. Then follow office-bearers with cups, and each one gives to another the cup of the Lord. Let not your majesty be offended at this custom of receiving and giving; for it has often been found that some who happened to sit together, but who had formerly had feuds and hatred one with another, in this partaking together either of the bread or of the cup have laid aside the passion of their minds.'[1]

The general principle before explained as essential to the Protestant idea of the sacraments, that they are appendages to the Word in the gospel, and never to be separated from it in their administration, implies that the observance of the Lord's Supper ought always to be preceded by or accompanied with the setting forth orally from the Bible of the great truths and events that it represents. On this account there must always be present at the observance one qualified to teach the people; and it is natural and fitting that he should preside in the feast, not, however, as one of a superior order, but as one of the brethren who not only gives the symbolical elements to the others, but also in turn receives them from them. In offering prayer and praise, the presiding minister is but the mouthpiece of the congregation; and in the act of communion he is not to be regarded as a priest dispensing the holy symbols to the people, but as one of a company of brethren sitting at a common table, and all alike receiving and enjoying the spiritual feast that the Lord gives them, and

of one of the two parts of the holy ordinance that Christ appointed for the refreshing of their souls.

[1] *Expositio Christianæ Fidei.*

that they all equally need. Paul refers to the blessing of the cup and the breaking of the bread as acts not of himself and his fellow-apostles alone, nor of a separate class of ministers, but of all those who are one body, being partakers of the one bread.[1] The more this can be made to appear in the outward arrangements of the Lord's Supper, the better does the meaning of the ordinance come out.

Questions.

Mention and explain the different names of this sacrament in Scripture and common use.
In what circumstances did Christ institute it?
Wherein does it resemble the Jewish Passover, and wherein does it differ from it?
What are the elements used, and what the actions in its observance?
How should the equality and brotherly love of Christians be seen in the form of it?
Why is the presence of a preacher of the gospel necessary for the Lord's Supper?

CHAPTER II.

THE THINGS REPRESENTED IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Sacrificial Death of Christ.—It is plainly taught in Scripture that the Lord's Supper is a symbolical ordinance, and that the main thing that it represents is the death of Christ. 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death' (1 Cor. xi. 26). We announce or declare by significant acts, what is the great theme of the preaching of the gospel, 'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' This death is here symbolized, not as in the sacrifices of earlier ages, by the actual slaying of a living animal, but by the breaking of a

[1] 1 Cor. x. 16. The 'we bless,' 'we break,' must, according to ver. 17, be, not 'we apostles,' or 'we ministers,' but 'we Christians'—all alike.

piece of bread representing the body of Christ, and the presentation of wine in a cup representing the shed blood of Christ. This ceremony, if it is a less vivid picture of our Saviour's death than the bloody sacrifices of old, is more refined and suited to the gentle and humane character of the Christian dispensation.[1] When the marvellous transaction of Calvary was still a thing of the future, it was fitting and necessary that the actual death of an animal should be used to prefigure it. But now that it is a matter of history, and fully recorded in the gospel narratives, the simple elements of broken bread and outpoured wine are sufficient to recall to the minds and hearts of Christians the sufferings and death of their Lord. They represent, however, the same great event as the sacrifices of former times prefigured, and that event is the great object of the faith of Christians. They represent the death of Christ as a violent one, which however He voluntarily and freely endured. The broken bread serves to recall how our Saviour's body was wounded and bruised, pierced and nailed to the cross; and the cup of wine, how His blood was shed from the wounds inflicted on Him. Then His words speaking of His body as given for us, declare how He gave Himself up freely and willingly to that painful and shameful death for our sake. But these symbols also unmistakably point to His death as a sacrificial one, not only for the good of sinners,

[1] Zwingli's remark on this is striking: 'Whence it is clearer than the sun that circumcision and the Passover, which could not be performed without blood, have been changed by Christ, who stays all bloodshed by His own blood, into those elements friendly to man: that we may see that the severity of the law has passed into the blessing of grace. Into the law which was consecrated with the blood of beasts, men were initiated by the blood of circumcision. Into Christ who has consecrated with His own blood the eternal covenant, we are initiated by the sprinkling of water, that we may see that the sacrificial fires have been extinguished by the blood of Christ. The Passover was a commemoration and general festivity in which they rejoiced that they had been delivered by the Lord from the Egyptian bondage. But that no trace of the bloody law might remain, Christ willed that His festivity or commemoration should be celebrated with the symbol of bread and wine, things most friendly to man.'—'De Vera et Falsa Religione,' *Zwinglii Opera*, vol. iii. p. 261, ed. Schuler and Schulthess.

but in their place, in order to the forgiveness of their sins. It is true that the word 'for' in the expressions 'broken for you,' 'shed for many,' does not by itself necessarily mean anything more definite than 'for the good of;' but not only did Jesus on another occasion speak of giving his life a ransom for many,[1] but in the very words of the Supper He declares that His blood is shed in order to the remission of sins, and as that of the new covenant[2] between God and man. The former covenant had been ratified by sacrifices;[3] but as these had been only typical ones of brute beasts, it could not really take away sin or establish a lasting peace and fellowship between God and man.[4] This however, Christ has done, when, in perfect obedience to the will of God, He gave Himself up voluntarily to endure all that divine justice required that the sins of men might be forgiven. This is the first thing represented in the Lord's Supper.

Our Participation in Christ's Death. — But in this ordinance we not only look at the symbols of Christ's death, but we receive and feed upon them, and so it symbolizes further our participation in Christ as crucified for us. As the bread and wine are not only held up for our contemplation, but held forth for our reception, we are taught that the Saviour is not only presented as an object of historical belief and admiration, but offered to us for personal appropriation. The gospel call is not only to believe that Christ has lived and died for us, but to receive Christ, and in Him eternal life, as the gift of God. The giving of the elements thus represents the free offer of Christ in

[1] Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45. The word rendered 'for' in these places is a different one, which can mean only 'instead of,' and is thus more definite than the other.

[2] The word 'testament' is the same that is elsewhere rendered 'covenant,' and it should be so translated in this place. In speaking of the new covenant, Jesus referred to the promise given in Jer. xxxi. 31–34, that God would make a new covenant with His people, different from that which He had made at Sinai.

[3] See Ex. xxiv. 3–8.

[4] This is explained at length in Heb. viii., ix., x.

the gospel: and the receiving of them represents the acceptance of that offer by faith, and indicates that saving faith implies a real vital appropriation of Christ; not a mere belief of truths or doctrines about Him, but a closing with Him as a person, a receiving and resting on Him alone for our salvation as He is offered to us in the gospel. We must, however, take this in connection with the significance of the elements themselves, and remember that it is Christ as crucified and dying for us that is offered in the gospel, and to be received by faith. We are to close with Christ on the cross, bearing the chastisement of our peace, and dying for us. Thus the receiving, and eating, and drinking the sacred elements, symbolize the experience that Paul describes when he says: 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20), that union and fellowship with Christ in His death that are frequently referred to in Scripture, and that are also symbolized by our being baptized unto the name of Christ. The symbolism of the Supper serves to bring out some important practical points in regard to the way of salvation. It illustrates very strikingly the freeness of the gospel offer, in the simple giving of the elements, without price or condition; all that is required on our part being simply the taking of what is presented to us by God in Christ. So also the simplicity of faith is shown by its being represented under the figure of eating and drinking, the most natural and instinctive acts of human nature. It is simply the response to the divine call, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Again, this ordinance vividly sets forth the vital union effected by faith between Christ and the believer. They are made one as truly as the food we eat becomes one with the substance of our bodies, as truly as the branch is one with the stem of the tree into which it is ingrafted.

Our Living through Participation in Christ's Death.—But there is still further a third symbolic aspect of the Lord's Supper. It represents not only the death of Christ as the object of our faith,

and the act of faith itself as uniting us to Christ, but also the effect of this faith as giving life, strength, and happiness to the soul. The Saviour who died for us, and whom we receive by faith, is presented and offered to us under the emblems of bread 'that strengtheneth man's heart,' and wine 'that maketh glad the heart of man;' and thus we are taught that in Christ we have life and strength and joy. This is a truth that is prominent in the teaching of the New Testament, where we are assured of eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord, and exhorted to be strong in the Lord, and to rejoice in the Lord always. Just as bread and wine nourish and invigorate the bodily life of man, so, this ordinance teaches us, does Christ, when received and fed upon by faith, give and sustain the life of the soul. This also shows the need of continual faith in Christ, not merely of one act of faith or appropriation of Him, but of a habitual life of faith. It shows, too, that in this life of faith, however long continued and mature it may be, we must ever be resting on the one original foundation; as the bread and wine whose use symbolizes our spiritual growth and vigour, must ever in the first place be regarded and used as emblems of the death of Christ, on which we must rely to the last, with the same simple faith as we did at first.

Union of Believers with one another.—Once more, in the fourth place, there is symbolized in this ordinance the union of believers with one another, as well as with Christ their Head. This is especially brought out by Paul in 1 Cor. x. 17: 'For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.' The word for bread signifies properly a loaf of bread; and the point of the comparison is that, as all the members of the Church partake of one loaf, so all are one body. It seems to have been the primitive custom to have the bread in the form of one undivided loaf, which was broken by the presiding minister, and then divided among the communicants, and this certainly represents more vividly the unity of the body of

Christ. All who believe in Him receive that one body that was broken for all, and are thus united into one spiritual body themselves, as He is in them all. The same idea is brought out in allusion to the cup in 1 Cor. xii. 13: 'We have been all made to drink one Spirit;'[1] and in the whole of that and the two following chapters the apostle illustrates the unity of the Church and the practical duties and obligations that flow from that unity. The Lord's Supper as a common meal aptly represents this, and tends also to foster the spirit of unity; and on that account it should, according to apostolic example, be observed by the Church or congregation as a whole, coming together as brethren united in Christ, to eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in remembrance of Him.

Questions.

What does the Lord's Supper teach about the death of Christ, its nature and purpose?
What ordinances represented this in the Old Testament, and why is the symbol different in the New?
What does it teach about the way of salvation by Christ, and the blessings of His salvation?
Give other instances in Scripture of spiritual blessings being represented by a feast.
What does the Lord's Supper teach about the unity of believers in Christ?

CHAPTER III.

THE PLEDGES GIVEN IN THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper a Seal.—The character of a seal, or personal token of good-will and friendship, is very emphatically impressed

[1] The insertion of 'into' before 'one Spirit' in the received text is not sufficiently supported, and makes the phrase more awkward than the simpler reading without it.

on the Lord's Supper by these words of our Saviour, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' For these words manifestly mean, not the bare memory of Him and His work as a historical fact, but the grateful remembrance of His love. It is as when one friend gives a keepsake to another, saying, 'Keep this, wear this, use this, in remembrance of me.' By so doing he makes the gift, however trifling in itself, and whatever other use it may have, a token of his love, and it will serve to assure his friend of the reality and faithfulness of it. Just so Jesus bade His disciples observe this ordinance as a memorial feast given them by Him, as a token of His love; and that, as we saw before, is what we mean when we say that the sacraments are not only signs but seals.

A Seal (1) of His Love.—The Lord's Supper is a seal to His people of His love in giving Himself to death for us. For it represents His sacrifice on the cross, and being instituted by Himself as a memorial of it, it shows that He would have us remember His love in it. In this aspect it is all the more touching and affecting, because it was instituted, as Paul is careful to emphasize, on that night in which He was betrayed. This shows, among other things, that Christ had a conscious and clear purpose in regard to His death: that it did not come upon Him as an accident or merely as the termination of His work, but was really a part, and a most important part, of His work itself. His death was no mere suffering, it was an offering of Himself to God, not merely a passion but in the highest sense an action. Further, on the very eve of His suffering, when His soul had already been troubled because His hour was come (John xii. 27), and was soon to be exceeding sorrowful even unto death, we find that He was fully conscious that His suffering was for others, and found time and leisure from His own woe to comfort His disciples and appoint the ordinance that was to keep them in mind of His dying love. Surely in the Supper instituted in such circumstances, and at such a time, we have a token of

His love in giving Himself for us such as may well touch and melt our hearts.

(2) **Of His Offer of Himself to us.**—But this ordinance seals to the disciples of Christ not only His love in the past, but His present sincerity and grace in now giving Himself to them as their Redeemer. For He calls us not only to behold the emblems of His broken body and shed blood, but to take, eat, and drink the symbolic bread and wine. This represents, as we have seen, the offer of Christ in the gospel; and as it was expressly appointed by Him for that purpose, it also gives us His personal assurance of the reality and sincerity of that offer. We have then in this sacrament a seal of Christ's gift of Himself to us fitted to encourage and strengthen our faith in closing with Him. As surely as the broken bread and outpoured wine are given to us in the Supper, so surely does Christ give Himself to us as dying for us, shedding His blood for the remission of our sins. This is fitted to remove doubts as to the warrant of faith which we have in the simple word and call of Jesus in the gospel.

(3) **Of the Blessings of Salvation.** — Once more, the Lord's Supper is a seal of the blessings that flow from our receiving Christ in faith. Since He has chosen as the symbols of His body and blood the substances of bread and wine, which in their natural use nourish and refresh the body, He would have us to be assured that His death for us, when received by us through faith, will in like manner sustain the life of the soul. He thus pledges to us the certainty of eternal life through faith in Him. So truly as the body is nourished and refreshed by bread and wine, so truly will the soul that receives Christ's body and blood through faith have eternal life, and have it ever more and more abundantly.

Of all these truths, most needful for us to be assured of, and yet about which sincere Christians are often sorely tempted to doubt, we have in the Lord's Supper a token and pledge, giving

us all the encouragement that such tokens naturally afford, to believe without doubt or hesitation, that He really loved us and gave Himself for us, that He most sincerely and freely offers Himself to us, and that He does assuredly save unto the uttermost all who come unto God through Him.

Our Profession of Faith in Christ.—But as on the one hand Christ by giving and continuing this sacrament to His people gives a pledge of these precious truths and promises, so on the other hand Christians by partaking of it give corresponding pledges on their part. By the very fact of observing the ordinance, and so showing the Lord's death, we testify our belief of the reality and importance of that great event; we declare it as one worthy to be commemorated and held forth to the eyes of the world. We profess that we are not ashamed of the cross of Christ, but rather glory in it. We must be held also as expressing our belief that it was really for the forgiveness of our sins and the establishment of the new and everlasting covenant between God and man that He died. This is a weighty and important testimony. But much more than this is implied in our partaking of the sacramental feast. When we receive the bread and wine that represent His broken body and shed blood, we signify our acceptance of His death as the atonement for our sins, and as our death to sin in and with Him. We say in act what Paul said in words: 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And by implication we express our hope of the spiritual and eternal life that Christ promises and offers to those who receive Him. For as no man eats and drinks without the hope and expectation of being nourished and strengthened thereby, so we cannot eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord without expressing the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And of Obedience to Him.—Further, since Christ's salvation is a deliverance from sin, in partaking of the Lord's Supper we give

a solemn pledge of our desire and purpose to depart from iniquity and to live a sober, righteous, and godly life, according to the teaching of that grace of God that has brought us salvation. We become sworn followers of Christ as our Leader and Captain, to keep His commandments and live as He has left us an example. This appears very clearly from the sayings of our Lord to His disciples at the institution of the Supper, Luke xxii. 21–38 ; John xiii. 13–16, 34–38, xiv. 15, 21, 23, xv. 1–17. But these discourses, as well as the nature of the ordinance, show that it is not the element of obligation to duty on our part that is most prominent. We do not come under these vows as if we could perform them in our own strength; we are shown, in the very rite that lays them upon us, the grace and strength in which alone we can fulfil them, and are taught that it is by abiding in Christ, and receiving Him as the food and life of our souls, that we can keep His commandments and bring forth fruit to God. Though it pledges us to Christ and to all that is involved in being Christ's disciples, yet it is not to be regarded as a bondage, but rather as a privilege. Just as those who enter with true affection into the marriage union do not regard this as a bondage but as a joy and blessing, though it does impose grave responsibilities and duties, so a soul that is truly espoused to Christ in faith and love will gladly accept the obligations to holiness implied in the Lord's Supper, being assured that with the obligation grace and strength for the duty will also be given.

Questions.

How does it appear that the Lord's Supper is a seal as well as a sign?
Of what is it a token on the part of Christ?
What does its reception betoken on our part?

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THE LORD'S SUPPER IS DESIGNED.

The Supper first partaken with Disciples.—The narratives of the Evangelists clearly show that it was with His disciples that our Lord held that last supper at which He instituted the simple rite that He bade them observe in remembrance of Him. It was not indeed a gathering of all those who believed in Him as the Messiah; for the women who had followed Him from Galilee, and others, to whom He appeared after His resurrection, were not there. These more numerous disciples had not yet been gathered into any company or assembly; and as the Jews' Passover feast was kept in family gatherings, it was natural and suitable that Jesus should have with Him only those twelve whom He had more closely associated with Himself, and who with Him would form a party similar to those in which the Passover was wont to be eaten. But it was distinctly as disciples that they were thus assembled; and the whole recorded conversation at the feast implies that they stood in that relation to Him. The very words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' show this. For the remembrance cannot be mere memory of a past event, but affectionate recollection of a friend and master. It was a feast for disciples that recognised and loved Jesus as their Master and Lord.

Continued to be so in Apostolic Times.—The same thing appears from the historical notices of the observance of the Supper in after days. It was they who gladly received the Word on the day of Pentecost, and continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, who observed the breaking of bread (Acts ii. 42, 46); and when Paul visited Troas on his last journey to Jerusalem, it was the disciples who came together to break bread (Acts xx. 7).

These indications of the fact that this ordinance was specially an observance of Christians are fully confirmed by the statements of Paul in his epistles, which are the only writings of the inspired apostles that contain any mention of the ordinance. In 1 Cor. x. 16–21, an important argument is founded on the acknowledged fact that eating the bread and drinking the cup of the sacrament was a peculiarly Christian ordinance, implying religious fellowship with Christ, just as truly as the Jewish or heathen sacrifices implied fellowship in their religious faith and worship. And in his explicit directions about the ordinance in chap. xi., he emphasizes the relation of the Supper to the Lord and His death for us, and declares that it is worthily observed only by those who recognise that relation.

Therefore designed for Disciples.—There is thus clear and consistent evidence from the New Testament for the general statement that the Lord's Supper is designed for disciples of Christ as such, and not for men in general or the world at large. Though the ordinance has a teaching power, analogous to that of the preaching of the gospel, which is to be addressed to all; yet it is not thus universal in its application, but intended for Christians as such. The reason of this is obvious from the symbolism of the Supper. It is not simply a presentation of truth on the part of God; it includes a representation of the acceptance of the gospel offer on our part, as signified by our receiving the emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood. This is an action which would have no meaning as done by one who does not believe in Christ, and is not willing to receive Him as offered in the gospel. To hear the preaching of the Word may be an involuntary thing, and even where it is not so, it does not necessarily imply more than a willingness to listen and attend to the message of Christ's salvation; but to take the symbols of Christ's death and to keep the feast that was appointed to be observed in remembrance of Him means, if it has any significance at all, that he who does so receives Christ as his Saviour and recognises Him as such. Thus the nature

and meaning of the ordinance correspond to the historical accounts of its observance as a special mark of Christian discipleship.

By Disciples are meant Christians.—This also shows, that by disciples in this connection we are to understand those who are not merely willing to be taught by Jesus, but who also come into spiritual relation to Him as their Saviour and Head. The sense in which Jesus Himself understood the apostles to be His disciples appears from the parable of the vine and the branches (John xv. 1–8), by which He illustrated their relation to Him. It is such, that they are one with Him, they abiding in Him and He in them. The same close and spiritual relation is also described by Paul as signified in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. x. 16, xii. 12, 13), and this explains why he speaks of the right observance of the Lord's Supper as requiring that a man examine himself (1 Cor. xi. 28). It is not a mere outward formal discipleship as of men attaching themselves to a master, the founder of some new faith or church: that would be a palpable fact requiring no special self-examination; it is that discipleship of which Paul says that no man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost; the entering the kingdom of God, which, as Jesus testifies, requires the new birth of the Spirit; that believing on Jesus which, as the Bible throughout declares, gives eternal life.

General Agreement of Christians on this.—On these scriptural grounds, the great majority of Christians have held that the Lord's Supper is for Christians; and that only those who are truly united to Christ by saving faith ought to come forward to partake of it.[1] The differences that have existed in this connection have been mainly not as to the question who ought them-

[1] The differences between the Greek, Roman, and Protestant Churches as to the way of salvation do indeed lead to different statements as to the qualifications required; but all coincide in the general principle, that only those who are in a state of grace and salvation through Christ ought to partake. That those who are consciously not so may lawfully communicate was held by some Congregationalists in America in the last century, but

selves to partake of it, but on the subordinate one to whom it ought to be given by the office-bearers of the Church. The Eastern Church holds that this sacrament, like that of Baptism, should be administered to the infant children of Christians, mainly on the ground that its necessity for salvation is supposed to be asserted in John vi. 53. But there is good reason to think that this text does not refer to the Lord's Supper, which was not instituted when Jesus uttered these words; and though some of the arguments for infant baptism might apply to infant communion also, there is in the Lord's Supper so distinct a representation of personal faith in the receiving of the bread and wine, and the requirement of self-examination is so distinct and emphatic, that we seem warranted to conclude that this sacrament was not intended for infants, but only for those capable of personal faith and self-examination. And the different conditions of circumcision and the Passover point to a similar distinction in the Old Testament between members under age and those of full standing.

Duty of the Church and of the Individual. — The Protestant Churches agree in holding that the Church by its office-bearers has a certain right and responsibility in the admission of persons to the Lord's table, so that not any who desire it are to be admitted, but only those who make a profession of Christianity. Such a profession, in order to be of any value, must be on the one hand intelligent, and on the other borne out, or at least not contradicted, by the life and conduct of him who makes it. Hence the Church is called upon to inquire, whether those who desire to partake of the communion understand the meaning of the ordinance and of the profession they make in it, whether with that understanding they do deliberately make the profession of Christianity, and whether their conduct is not inconsistent with that profession.[1] There

Jonathan Edwards is generally thought to have conclusively refuted this opinion in his *Inquiry concerning Qualifications for Communion.*

[1] Paul speaks of some who 'profess that they know God but in works deny Him,' Tit. i. 16; 'having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;' and says, 'from such turn away,' 2 Tim. iii. 5, 9; 1 Cor. v.

are some differences in detail as to the kind and amount of evidence on these points that different churches require; but all are agreed on these chief points, that there must be some credible appearance of real Christianity in those who are to be admitted; that the Church's judgment is not certain or infallible, and in charity always leans to the more favourable presumption; and that the chief responsibility in the matter must be with the communicant himself. In the Presbyterian Churches, while the minister should do all in his power to instruct and guide the intending communicant, he does not undertake to judge for him as to his state, but simply admits him on his own profession when that is not invalidated either by gross ignorance or plainly inconsistent conduct. This is in accordance with the apostolic precept enjoining every man to examine—*i.e.* test or try—himself in the view of eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord. The Church excludes those who are ignorant or scandalous,[1] *i.e.* openly wicked, but she testifies that Christ forbids all those that are ungodly, whatever they may appear to the eyes of men, and that in regard to this, each one who comes to the Lord's table must judge himself on his own personal responsibility to Him who knoweth all things.

Self-Examination.—The subject on which we are to examine ourselves must evidently be the great and vital question whether we are truly disciples of Christ, since, as we have seen, it is for such that the Supper is appointed; and as this is a matter on which we are most deeply concerned to know the truth even without consideration of this or any Christian ordinance, it is clear that the sacrament imposes on us no new and needless duty, but rather serves as an additional reminder and motive to a duty in itself most important, yet apt to be neglected. The distinguishing marks of true Christians, as indicated in connection with the Lord's Supper, are well summed up in our Shorter Catechism, as being 'knowledge to discern the Lord's body, faith to feed upon

[1] Larger Catechism, 173; cf. Confession of Faith, chap. xxix. sec. 8.

Him, repentance, love, and new obedience.' The first of these is preliminary, and may be found separate from the others; it is also a matter on which others can judge as well as ourselves, and therefore on this point the Church may properly take a large share of the responsibility. But the other points are all inseparably connected, and are, indeed, just various sides and manifestations of the one great reality of spiritual life. If we are certain that any of them exists in us, we may be sure that in more or less degree they all do so; but, on the other hand, if any of them is certainly and entirely absent, there can only be a deceptive appearance of the others. Thus in Scripture sometimes faith,[1] sometimes repentance,[2] sometimes love,[3] sometimes obedience[4] is spoken of as the requirement and test of our being saved by Christ; and we are taught that these are all necessarily connected, that faith worketh by love,[5] that faith without works is dead,[6] that love must be out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned;[7] and that it should be not in word only but in deed and in truth;[8] while, on the other hand, deeds of beneficence are of no avail without love.[9] To have so many different aspects of Christianity presented to us is of great help to self-examination in two ways. On the one hand it enables those who are beginners in the Christian life the better to recognise it in themselves, since the existence of any one of these graces or exercises may give good ground for hope, and some may find in themselves one of these, while others may find another. The new life in the Philippian jailor manifested itself first by his faith; in the woman who was a sinner who anointed Christ's feet, by her much love; in Zaccheus, by his repentance in departing from old sins; and in one who followed not Christ with the twelve, by his good work of casting out devils in His name.

[1] John iii. 15, 16, 36; Acts xvi. 31; Rom. i. 16, 17, etc.
[2] Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17; Acts ii. 38, etc.
[3] Luke vii. 47; 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3; 1 John iv. 7, 8, etc.
[4] Matt. vii. 21, xix. 17; 1 Cor. vii. 19; 1 John ii. 29, iii. 7, etc.
[5] Gal. v. 6. [6] Jas. ii. 17, 20, 26. [7] 1 Tim. i. 5.
[8] 1 John iii. 17, 18. [9] 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3.

Thus, if we can see in ourselves genuine signs of any of these graces, it is well. On the other hand, however, since all these are inseparable, their variety serves as a searching test of the genuineness of each. There is a faith that is dead, merely of the head, not of the heart,—that is detected, as in the case of Simon Magus, by the absence of holiness; there is a repentance that is only the sorrow of the world, that worketh death,—that is detected by the absence of faith, as in Judas Iscariot; there is a love that is mere emotional feeling,—that is detected by the absence of good works, as in the case of those represented by the stony ground hearers; and there is a kind of obedience that is merely outward, as in the case of the Pharisees,—which is detected by the absence of faith and love in the heart. Therefore we do well to try ourselves, not by one only, but by all of these tests, remembering that if the real presence of any one of them is a sure token for good, the entire absence of any one is as certainly an adverse indication.

By such marks as these, reflecting on his own state of mind and heart, and considering his life and conduct, a disciple of Christ may know himself to be such; and when that self-examination is carried on with an honest desire to know the truth, and with earnest prayer to God to guide us and keep us from deceiving ourselves, the result, if favourable, may be taken as a testimony of God to our acceptance in Christ. This may also be accompanied with the more direct working of the Spirit of God's Son crying in us 'Abba, Father,' and thus bearing witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God. Those who have this conviction and testimony may, with most joyful hearts and undoubting minds, come to the table of the Lord to commemorate His dying love.

Duty of those who are in Doubt.—But the Word of God and Christian experience indicate that this full assurance of faith, though attainable and most desirable, is not always possessed by all believers. Such is the imperfection of the faith and holiness even of the best, and such the deceitfulness of the heart of man,

that it may often happen that the result of the most earnest and faithful self-examination is a painful state of doubt and fear as to our being in Christ. What we ought to do in such a case is described with admirable wisdom and considerateness in the Larger Catechism, 172. It is first said that 'one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof.' The want of assurance does not necessarily imply the want of a true interest in Christ; while it is indicated, by the expression 'not yet assured,' that one who has a true interest in Christ may expect ere long to be assured of it, and that his doubt will be only temporary. It is added that one who doubts of his interest in Christ, 'in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it; and unfeignedly desires to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity.' There may be a state of mind different from this. A man may be in doubt as to his state because he has not taken the trouble to examine himself faithfully, but such a one cannot be duly affected with the awful consequences of being out of Christ. Or, though he earnestly desires to be saved from these consequences, he may have no desire to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity; and in such a case he cannot but be in doubt of his state. But where neither of these is the case, then whatever he may seem in his own sight, in God's account he has an interest in Christ, and therefore the Lord's Supper is for him, since God's promises are made and the sacrament is ordained, for Christians indeed, but not only for such as are perfect and have full assurance that they are such, but even for the weak and doubting. Yet, while such a one is encouraged by this gracious invitation, he is not to rest content with his state of doubt and uncertainty. He is to bewail his unbelief, recognising that his want of assurance springs from sin in him, more especially from the sin of unbelief; and he is to labour to have his doubts resolved, so as to attain to the full assurance of faith. And how is he to labour for this? Not so much by more minute and careful self-searching as by growth in

grace. 'It is not God's design,' says Jonathan Edwards, 'that men should obtain assurance in any other way than by mortifying corruption, increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it. And although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance, and by no means to be neglected, yet it is not the principal means by which the saints do get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination as by action. The Apostle Paul sought assurance chiefly this way, even by forgetting the things that were behind and reaching forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. And it was by this means chiefly that he obtained assurance, 1 Cor. ix. 26: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly." He obtained assurance of winning the prize more by running than by considering. The swiftness of his pace did more towards his assurance of a conquest than the strictness of his examination. Giving all diligence to grow in grace, by adding to faith virtue, etc., is the direction that the Apostle Peter gives us for making our calling and election sure, and having an entrance ministered to us abundantly into Christ's everlasting kingdom. Without this our eyes shall be dim, and we shall be as men in the dark; we cannot plainly see either the forgiveness of our sins past, or our heavenly inheritance that is future and far off (2 Pet. i. 5–11).'[1]

It is worthy of observation that the Shorter Catechism very properly corrects the Authorized Version of 1 Cor. xi. 29, by substituting the right rendering 'judgment' for the wrong and misleading 'damnation.' The judgment to which Paul referred is, as he explains in ver. 32, the chastening of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the wicked. In the case of the Corin-

[1] *On Religious Affections*, Part III., Introductory Remarks. The whole section is worthy of attention, all the more as occurring in a treatise that is perhaps the most searching in its anatomy of the thoughts and desires of the heart that ever was written.

thians, it consisted in bodily weakness, sickness, and death; but it may be any dealing of the Lord by which we may be aroused to know ourselves when we have shrunk from seeking to do so by self-examination. It is also important to observe that our Standards follow the language of Scripture in speaking of Christians, not as being worthy to receive the Lord's Supper, but as worthily partaking of it, *i.e.* doing so in an appropriate and suitable manner or state of mind. It is not as if we could not venture to come to the Lord's table unless our self-examination showed that we were worthy of this privilege: in that case none could honestly come. Any true self-examination will show us more than ever our sinfulness and unworthiness; but this very sense of sin, if it leads us to cast ourselves more unreservedly on Christ, is the best preparation for the Lord's Supper. For, to use the words of Knox's *Exhortation*, 'the end of our coming thither is not to make protestation that we are upright or just in our lives, but contrariwise we come to seek our life and perfection in Jesus Christ, acknowledging in the meanwhile that we of ourselves be the children of wrath and damnation.' To the same effect is the beautiful prayer in the English service: 'We do not presume to come to this Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table. But Thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us.'

Questions.

Show from Scripture that the Lord's Supper is intended for disciples of Christ.

What is implied in being a disciple, and how may one know whether he is such?

What is the duty of the Church, and what of the individual in this matter?

Give Scripture illustrations of the grounds of assurance of faith, and of the duty of those who are in doubt.

What is the sin and consequence of unworthy communicating?

Explain the difference between being worthy to partake and worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER V.

THE EFFICACY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper a Means of Grace.—That the solemn ordinance which our Lord instituted on the night in which He was betrayed has, when duly observed by His disciples, a power to do good to their souls, might be presumed from the general truth of the goodness and wisdom of our Saviour. He does not burden men with useless and unprofitable observances, or command them to do certain things merely for the sake of testing their obedience and receiving their homage: if He appoints a certain service for them to keep, it is because He designs to make it the means of spiritual benefit to them, so that in their faithful observance of it not only is He honoured, but they are blessed. So Christians have in all ages found it to be. They have enjoyed precious spiritual blessings in the keeping of their Lord's dying command, and found the Supper to be an ordinance by which their faith, and hope, and love have been quickened and strengthened, and their efforts after holiness stimulated and aided. We have also express Scripture warrant for regarding the Lord's Supper as a means of spiritual blessing. Paul blames the Corinthian Christians because, in their careless way of observing the ordinance as a mere love-feast, they came together not for the better but for the worse (1 Cor. xi. 17), thus plainly implying that their observance ought to be for the better, and would be so did they rightly understand and use it. The same apostle also teaches how this sacrament is designed to be for our spiritual good; for

in that place he goes on to tell the Corinthian disciples that their error consisted in their not discerning the Lord's body (ver. 29). Consequently what he would have them to do, in order that their coming together to the Supper might be for the better, was to discern the Lord's body, *i.e.* to recognise the bread and wine as being symbols of Christ's body and blood, and receive them as such, after examining themselves as to their state of mind in regard to Christ's death.

Partaking of Christ's Body and Blood.—This agrees with what the apostle had said before in the same epistle (x. 16): 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' This statement gives a more particular view of what the other passage indicates generally, and thus shows us wherein precisely the benefit of the Lord's Supper to believers consists. It lies in this, that it is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. The word rendered communion means here, as it does throughout the Bible, joint participation, partaking in common. It is the same word that is rendered below, 'partakers of the altar' (ver. 18), 'fellowship with devils' (ver. 20). The Jewish worshippers in the temple, when they partook of the animals, the fat of which had been burned on the altar before God, were joint partakers with the altar; the Corinthians, when they sat at meat in an idol's temple, were joint partakers with the false deity in the sacrifice. So, Paul says, in the Eucharist we are joint partakers of the body and blood of Christ. Now, from his saying in ver. 21, 'Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils,' it is evident that he is speaking of a true and spiritual partaking of Christ's body and blood, since that only is impossible to be conjoined with a fellowship with devils. He cannot, therefore, have meant either of two things that have been held by many. One is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, that the substance of the bread is really

changed into the body of Christ, and that of the wine into His blood; so that we do in a bodily way partake of Christ. This manner of receiving Christ is, as its supporters themselves admit, not inconsistent with a heart given to wickedness; and so this would have afforded no argument to the apostle. The other opinion that the force of the argument excludes, is that of those who regard the sacrament as nothing more than a memorial sign of Christ's death for our redemption. It is equally true, and allowed by themselves, that the observance of such a memorial is not incompatible with having fellowship with devils. If there is any force in his argument, Paul must mean to say, that in the Lord's Supper believers do have a spiritual fellowship with Christ, which cannot be had along with any fellowship with evil; and this cannot be either a bodily reception of the substance of Christ's body, or a bodily reception merely of the symbol of it, but must consist in the soul's partaking, in a spiritual yet real way, of Christ and His salvation. This passage, then, understood in the light of the context, fully bears out the doctrine of the Reformed Church, which is expressed in the Shorter Catechism thus: that in the Lord's Supper, by the giving and receiving of bread and wine, not only is Christ's death shown forth, but the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal or carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood.

Christ's Body and Blood in His Death. — This, however, may require a somewhat fuller explanation, which must be drawn from Scripture. We must have a distinct idea of what is meant by the body and blood of Christ in this connection, and then we shall understand better how we are partakers of them. Now, we find that Christ's body and blood are spoken of separately, and are represented by two distinct things,—the bread and the wine, —which are given and received each by itself. We are thus to think of His body and blood as separated the one from the other. But so they were only in His death, when His blood was poured forth, as He laid down His life for us. That this is the aspect in

which He is presented to us appears still more clearly from the fact that the bread is broken and the wine poured forth, to represent, as is expressly said, His body broken, *i.e.* pierced and wounded, and His blood shed for us. It is the death of Christ that we show forth in the Supper. The phrase 'body and blood' is in fact equivalent to death. To be guilty of the body and blood of Christ is to be guilty of His death; to be partakers of the body and blood of Christ is to be partakers of His death. When we look at it in this way, we at once see that this is an idea of frequent and familiar use in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. We are baptized into the death of Christ, buried with Him by baptism into His death, crucified with Him, dead with Him, having the fellowship of His sufferings, etc.[1] We are not chiefly to think, in the Lord's Supper, of the body of Christ as now raised and glorified in heaven, but rather of that body as it hung upon the cross, when His blood flowed forth and He gave up His life a sacrifice to God: we are to think of His body and blood with reference to His sacrifice offered on the cross. It was there that His flesh and blood became a principle of life for our souls. So Jesus taught in His discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, when He spoke of Himself as the bread of life. He said, 'The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world,'[2] plainly pointing to His death; and it is only after this that he spoke of His flesh and blood separately (vers. 53–56).

Feeding on His Body and Blood.—Thus we see in what sense it is that Christ's body and blood are really present in the Eucharist: not that His glorified body is present in substance in, with, or under the elements of bread and wine, but that His death is present to the faith of believers. Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us. He is presented to our faith by the

[1] See Rom. vi. 3–11; Gal. ii. 20; Phil. iii. 10, etc.

[2] John vi. 51. The words 'which I will give,' in the received text, are omitted by the best authorities.

Word and Sacrament as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, being even now in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain. By faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, we behold Him and look to Him, as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent; by faith we become one with Him, accepting His death as the wages of our sin, and dying with Him to sin, that with Him we may rise to newness of life. This is the true feeding upon Christ as sacrificed for us, by which Christ dwells in us and we in Him. 'To nourish our soul,' one has well said, 'is to give it the sense of peace with God, and to strengthen it in faith, in piety, in holiness, and in hope of eternal life. For this it needs only an objective presence, as it is called, —that is to say, that the body and blood of our Saviour are presented to our faith, in so far as they are the sacrifice offered to God for our redemption, and that our faith accepts them in that character. It is from the lively and deep impression of these objects, and from the acceptance we make of them, that there arises the mystical communion which we have with Jesus Christ and His benefits. From thence come all the motives of our consolation, of our sanctification, and of our hope; from thence is derived that Holy Spirit which He communicates to us to quicken and consecrate us to Himself; and from thence, finally, flows the right that we have to the blessed resurrection and the glory of heaven.'[1] It is not merely that we receive benefits from the death of Christ for us,—that is true, but it is not the whole truth,—we receive Christ Himself, and only by receiving Him as a personal Saviour dying for us can we receive any of His benefits. While, then, we take with the hand and mouth of the body the bread and wine that are the symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood, we do really, if we exercise faith, receive the reality in our hearts, and are united in spirit with Christ as our sacrifice.

Christ spiritually present in the Sacrament.—The communion that believers have with Christ at His table may be illustrated

[1] Claude, *Traité de l'Eucharistie*, 1670, pp. 305, 306.

by what He said to His disciples at the first communion table: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' (John xiv. 21, 23). Something like this we find where there is strong affection and mutual understanding and trust between men, even by the natural working of our mental and moral constitution. If man can have communion in thought with his fellow-mortal who is dead and gone, and only present to the mind by his recorded or remembered words,—who shall doubt that there may be a far more real and intimate communion between our spirit and that Saviour who is not dead but living, and everywhere present? Instead of the mere working of memory, affection, and imagination, we have the agency of the Spirit of God, who has direct access to our spirits, and who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. Thus there is a real though spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and a real fellowship of our souls with Him.[1]

Communion with Christ not limited to the Supper.—It is true, indeed, that this spiritual communion with Christ by which the life of our souls is nourished is not confined to the Lord's Supper, but is realized by every Christian as often as he exercises faith in Christ as His Redeemer. This has sometimes been made an objection to the view that the Reformed Churches have taken of the efficacy of the sacrament; for it has been said that if we only receive in the sacrament what we can also receive without it, then the sacrament is superfluous. But a complete answer has been given to this by an old Scottish divine, whose words we may here give, as they serve also to throw light on the subject:

[1] See this fully illustrated in a sermon on John xiv. 21–26, in *Discourses bearing upon the Sonship and Brotherhood of Believers, and other kindred subjects*, by Robert S. Candlish, D.D.

'We admit the antecedent to be true; we get na uther thing nor na new thing in the sacrament but the same thing quhilk we gat in the Word. I will give thee to devise and imagine with thyselfe quhat new thing would thou have: Let the heart of man devise, imagine, and wish; he durst never have excogitat to have sik a thing as the Son of God: he durst never have presumed to have pearsed the clouds, to have gane sa heigh, and to have craved the Son of God, in His flesh, to be the food of his saull. Having the Son of God, thou hes Him quha is the heir of all things, quha is the King of heaven and earth, and in Him thou hes all thinges: quhat mair then can thou wish? Quhat better thing can thou wish? He is equall with the Father, ane in substaunce with the Father, true God, and true man; quhat mair can thou wish? Then, I say, we get na uther thing in the sacrament nor we get in the Word: content thee with this. But suppose it be sa, yit the sacrament is not superfluous. But would thou understand quhat new thing thou gets, quhat uther thing thou gets? I will tell thee. Suppose thou get that same thing quhilk thou gat in the Word, yit thou gets that same thing better; quhat is that better? Thou gets a better grip of that same thing in the sacrament nor thou gat be the hearing of the Word. That same thing quhilk thou possessed be the hearing of the Word, thou possessest now mair largely; he hes a greater bounds in thy saull be the receaving of the sacrament, nor utherways he could have be the hearing of the Word onelie. Then speers thou, quhat new thing we get? I say, we get this new thing,—we get Christ better nor we did before; we get the thing that we gat mair fullie, that is, with a surer apprehension nor we had of before; we get a better grip of Christ now: For be the sacrament my faith is nurished, the bounds of my saull is enlarged, and sa, quhere I had but a little grip of Christ before, as it were betwixt my finger and my thumbe, now I get Him in my haill hande; and ay the mair that my faith growes, the better grip I get of Christ Jesus.'[1]

[1] *Sermons by Mr. Robert Bruce*, Edinburgh, 1590, Wodrow Society's edition, pp. 49, 50.

The experience of believers at the Lord's table is not something distinct in nature or kind from the communion with Christ which they have at other times when their faith and love are in lively exercise. The spiritual feeding on Christ is not limited to the Supper, but may be enjoyed at any time and in any place. This is the liberty and blessing of the New Testament, that men may pray and worship and have the highest fellowship with God in every place and at any time. Christ's promise given after the first communion, 'He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him' (John xiv. 21), is not limited to communion seasons: the only condition that our Lord puts upon it is that implied in the explanation given to Judas (ver. 23), 'If a man love me he will keep my words;' *i.e.*, there must be some revelation of Christ received and kept in love. But that revelation may be made otherwise than in the Supper. Few Christians, it may be believed, have not felt that they have had as close and blessed communion with Christ at other times as they have ever had at the Lord's table, in some hour of heart-searching meditation, or in a time of sickness, when the Saviour is with them to comfort them, or by the death-bed of some Christian friend when the Lord has been strengthening him and bringing the great realities of His grace into clear and vivid light. No other, no higher fellowship than is experienced at such moments, is to be looked for at the Lord's table; and in comparison with them, communion experiences may sometimes seem but tame and meagre. But on the other hand there are few Christians who will not feel, that in the ordinary tenor of their lives, when they have to be occupied with the business and cares of life, it is not easy to maintain close fellowship with Christ, and that the simple but touchingly suggestive symbols of the Lord's Supper do help them to such spiritual communion as they cannot ordinarily attain without them.

Questions.

How does it appear that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace?
What is meant by our being made partakers of Christ's body and blood, and how is this done?
In what sense can we speak of a real presence of Christ or of His body and blood in the Lord's Supper?
Can we feed upon Christ apart from the Lord's Supper?
If so, what is the need and use of the Sacrament?

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Our Duty.—The efficacy of the Lord's Supper to communicate spiritual blessings to the soul depends primarily on the gracious working of the Holy Spirit; but, as in every part of Christian life we are called to be fellow-workers with God, there are certain things that we may do towards this end, and must do if we would have it realized in our experience. These are partly before partaking of the sacramental feast, partly at the time of partaking itself, and partly after it; and as the exercises proper to these several times are different, they call for separate consideration.

Before Communion.—Before coming to the Lord's table, there is needed, besides that self-examination by which we judge if we can rightly partake of it, also a stirring up of those dispositions and desires that are required for doing so, especially faith, repentance, and love. For we need to have these not merely as habits, which may be dormant in the soul for a season, but as acts of the soul in lively exercise. It is by faith that we are not only prepared to feed upon Christ, but actually do feed upon Him (John vi. 35, 47). Coming to Christ, believing on Him, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, are spoken of by our Lord as one and the same thing; and all alike are connected with having

eternal life, living by Him, dwelling in Him and He in us. If then we would enjoy this blessing at the Lord's Supper, we must not only have had faith at some former time, or have the habitual disposition to trust in Him, but be actually trusting to Him at the time we observe it. We must draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, *i.e.* with undoubting reliance on Christ as our High Priest. So, too, our love must be in actual exercise. 'This do in remembrance of me,' are Christ's words, making the Supper the pledge of love between Himself and His disciples. But the very purpose of a pledge or token of love is to call forth into lively exercise the love that exists as a habitual principle in the soul. There is always filial affection in the heart of a right-minded son towards his parents, though at times his thoughts and feelings may be necessarily engaged with other duties. But when he looks on a keepsake that he has received from them, the actual feelings of filial love wake up in his breast and fill him with emotion. So, while engaged in the ordinary duties of life, the child of God may not actually have present feelings of love to God and Christ, though that dwells in his heart, but when called to the Lord's table he should have these feelings in fresh and lively exercise.

The exercise of self-examination has this special benefit among others, that it powerfully tends to draw forth into exercise the graces especially of repentance and love that are needed for rightly observing the Lord's Supper. No faithful scrutiny of our state and character can fail to disclose much that is humbling and to lead us to a deeper sense of sin, while this at the same time is fitted to give us more affecting views of the love of God in bearing with and pardoning and blessing those who are so unworthy as we feel ourselves to be.

Means of awakening Faith.—But the most direct means of awakening faith and all these graces in the soul are the Word of God and prayer. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God;' and on the other hand, it is given us on the

behalf of Christ to believe on Him: and faith is to be sought in prayer.

Here, then, are two exercises in which the intending communicant should be much engaged: (1) Reading and meditating upon the Word of God. We should seek to have our minds filled and our thoughts occupied with the truths of God's Word, especially those that are represented in the sacrament. To read over thoughtfully and reverently those portions of Scripture that most clearly set forth these, such as the gospel narratives of our Saviour's sufferings, His farewell discourses and prayer (John xiii.–xvii.), and those passages in the Psalms, in prophecy, and the apostolic epistles, that show the meaning and purpose of His sufferings, or the love of God shown in them, or the fulness of blessings bestowed in Christ; to have the mind occupied with the thought of these things, and with particular texts and statements about them, is a most fitting preparation for the Lord's Supper, and contributes much to the spiritual enjoyment and profit of the ordinance. (2) Earnest prayer for the Lord's blessing in His ordinance. We should feel that we are entirely dependent on the Spirit of God; for however conscientiously and faithfully we may seek to prepare ourselves, it is He alone who can give the blessing, and for this, as for all spiritual blessings, He will be inquired of by His people to do it for them. We should endeavour also to be definite and particular in our prayers at such a time. The exercise of self-examination will have shown us what special sins we have to confess, what shortcomings or failures of duty we have been guilty of, and in what graces we are as yet defective; and will thus suggest the propriety of praying especially that in the Lord's Supper we may receive help and strength to resist and overcome these sins, and may have these graces given and increased to us. Again, the devout study of God's Word may well bring before us truths that we have not yet experienced and promises that we have not yet enjoyed; and it will be well to ask that we may be led into these at the Lord's table.

Such is the way in which communicants ought to prepare, before coming to the Lord's table, for a right and profitable observance of the sacrament.

In Communion.—At the table itself, it is also needful that we be rightly exercised. But now the frame of mind that is suitable is somewhat different. Before coming, the proper exercise of soul is largely reflective, looking inward upon ourselves; self-examination is what is most expressly required in Scripture. But when we are actually at the table, the time for that is past, and the proper exercise is communion with Christ, which is held by the direct acting of faith. We are then to be actually seeking the Lord, and waiting on Him; and for that end, we must make use of the outward signs appointed to help our faith. We are to look intently on the bread and wine, and the actions of breaking the bread, and giving it and the cup; but we are not to limit our attention to these, but to look to what they represent, the Saviour, who was crucified for us, who is as truly present to our faith as the emblems are to our senses. This was beautifully indicated in a very old and universally used form of words in the celebration of the Eucharist. According to the oldest liturgies and accounts that we have of the service, the observance of the Lord's Supper began with a salutation or blessing from the minister to the people, 'The Lord be with you all,' to which they responded, 'And with thy spirit.' Then he said, 'Lift up your hearts,' and they responded, 'We lift them up unto the Lord;' and then followed the thanksgiving after the example of Jesus. This form was retained in all the liturgical services, even through the most corrupt ages of the Church, and it was appealed to by the Reformers as a surviving testimony of an earlier and purer faith, that did not regard the elements as transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ, but ascended in spirit to feed by faith upon the Saviour Himself at God's right hand. Thus John Knox, following Calvin, paraphrases the exhortation, 'Lift up your hearts,' in his address before the

communion, as follows :—'Then to the end that we may be worthy partakers of His merits and most comfortable benefits, which is the true eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood, let us not suffer our minds to wander about the consideration of these earthly and corruptible things (which we see present to our eyes, and feel with our hands), to seek Christ bodily present in them, as if He were enclosed in the bread and wine, or as if these elements were turned and changed into the substance of His flesh and blood; for the only way to dispose our souls to receive nourishment, relief, and quickening of His substance, is to lift up our minds by faith above all things worldly and sensible, and thereby to enter into heaven, that we may find and receive Christ where He dwelleth undoubtedly very God and very man, in the incomprehensible glory of His Father, to whom be all praise, honour, and glory, now and ever, Amen.'[1] Our exercise of soul at the Lord's table should be as much as possible a direct looking to Jesus as now offered to us in the Word and sacrament, not thinking of ourselves, but of what He has done, and how He has loved us, trusting in Him and taking in the comfort, strengthening, and joy that His work and His love are fitted to impart. If there be but a single-eyed contemplation of Christ and Him crucified, we may safely leave to the guidance of the Holy Spirit the special course and form of our thoughts and affections, whether these may be led towards a deeper sorrow and hatred of sin, or warmer gratitude and love to Christ, or stronger confidence and hope in His grace. Our Larger Catechism enumerates with great fulness and spiritual discernment, the various exercises proper while receiving the Lord's Supper; but though all these are present virtually and as it were in germ, it is not to be supposed that they must or can all be deliberately and consciously gone through. If we are looking directly to Christ as set forth in the sacrament, we may trust the Spirit to guide us to such actual exercises as are most suitable and needful for us.

[1] *Book of Common Order.* Cf. Calvin's *Form of Prayers in Geneva.*

After Communion. — But for the practical use of the Lord's Supper, there is also a duty to be performed by us after we have partaken of it. In the Supper itself, we are, as we have seen, to be looking directly to Christ; not reflecting on our own state at all. The more simply we do this, the more may we expect a blessing. But thereafter it would be wrong and ungrateful not to look at ourselves, to see what we have received. The ten lepers looked in the first instance directly to Jesus, when they lifted up their voice and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,' and they took Him at His word when He said to them, 'Go show yourselves unto the priests.' But the one who returned to give glory to God, must have known and been assured that he had indeed received the healing that he sought. So we ought to reflect, after the Lord's Supper, whether we have really fed upon Christ, and received spiritual blessing from Him. If we have indeed done so, then we ought, like that cleansed leper, to give God the glory, and return hearty thanks to Him for His goodness, remembering that the best and most acceptable thanks we can render is by yielding ourselves entirely to God, as a living sacrifice of praise, and living a life of obedience to His law. We should also take encouragement to wait upon God in this and all His ordinances in time to come, and seek, by walking humbly with Him in faith and love, to have the spiritual gifts that He has bestowed upon us continued and strengthened. One who has consciously received a blessing at the Lord's table may say with the Psalmist, 'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever · forsake not the works of Thine own hands.'

It may be, however, that we are not sensible of having received any spiritual good in the Lord's Supper; we have not been filled with joy and peace in believing; we have not had any remarkable feeling of the grace and love of Christ, or of our interest in Him; we cannot even say that our penitence or sense of unworthiness has been at all deepened; we have still to complain of coldness and hardness, or of doubts and fears which we had hoped would have been removed at the Lord's table. In such a case, we

should consider well whether the blessing has been hindered by anything in ourselves. We should renew our self-examination, to see whether we may not have come unworthily, either without real faith in Christ at all, or without having had it in actual exercise at the time. It may be that even in a truly Christian soul, a want of devout meditation on the Word, or of prayer, or too great engrossment with the things of this life, has prevented the Lord's Supper from being a means of blessing. In such a case, the course of duty manifestly is to repent and confess the sin, and to resolve and endeavour to avoid it in time to come, so that future communions may be more spiritually blessed.

But it is not always the case that the want of conscious blessing and joy at the Lord's table can be traced to any want of due preparation or earnest seeking the Lord. It is no doubt true, as every sincere Christian will acknowledge, that even with our best efforts we do not realize the ideal of that hungering and thirsting after righteousness that God has promised to fill, that purity of heart that enables us to see God. We can never, therefore, complain, as if God were unrighteous if He withholds from us the light of His countenance and the joy of His salvation. Still this is not always a consequence or a chastisement of any peculiar carelessness or unworthiness in our approach to Him. We see in many of the Psalms that the people of God were sometimes in darkness from the hiding of God's countenance, when He was not so much chastising their sins as trying their faith. Even in the New Testament we read that Paul on some occasions had much affliction and anguish of heart; had no rest in his spirit, without were fightings, within were fears; had given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him.[1] It may be, therefore, that even when a Christian has been keeping the Lord's Supper with all earnestness and devotion, from providential circumstances or causes unknown to him, he may fail to have that comfort and blessing that he may formerly have enjoyed in it. Such an experience is always fitted to humble us;

[1] 2 Cor. ii. 4, 13, vii. 5, xii. 7.

but it ought not to lead a sincere believer to despondency or despair. There may be real spiritual benefit from the sacrament, though it is not conscious, and does not assume the form of joy or peace, or immediate strengthening of our faith. In the Lord's Supper, as well as in Baptism, the efficacy of the sacrament is not tied to that moment of time in which it is administered; but it may be felt afterwards in a calm but deepened sense of the reality and trustworthiness of the great salvation that is in Christ, a conviction of the sureness of the ground of faith, and a resolution to cleave with purpose of heart unto the Lord. Thus a believer may sometimes come to see, days or weeks after partaking of the Lord's Supper, that his communion has not been so unprofitable as it seemed at the time. Above all, whether our experience be encouraging or disappointing, we must ever remember that it is to the Saviour Himself that we must look in faith at all times, to Him through the sacrament when we have the opportunity of observing it; but when it is over or denied us, still to Him, who is as really present with His people always even to the end of the world, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.

Prospective Reference of the Lord's Supper.—It is to be remembered also, that the Lord's Supper points forward to a more perfect and blessed communion with Him than itself affords. At the first communion Christ was still present in the body with His disciples, and He bade them do this in remembrance of Him in the prospect of His being soon taken from them. Lest when out of their sight He should be out of their mind, He gave them this memorial of what He was to them and had done for them. But at the same time He gave them the hope that this should only be for a season, and that there would be a day when He should be with them again in the body; so that they might have a feast as before with Him among them in bodily presence, a feast that would be far more blessed than any they had with Him then, for He said, 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's

kingdom' (Matt. xxvi. 29; Mark xiv. 25). He is leaving the world, and the heavens must receive Him till the consummation of all things: when His disciples are eating the bread and drinking the cup in remembrance of Him, He is not eating or drinking with them. But the day is coming when His Father's kingdom shall be established, and when He shall come again to be once more in the body with His people: then in the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, He will feast with them in a far more glorious and blessed way than He did before. To this He taught them to look forward as He Himself looked forward to it at the Supper. So Paul says, 'Ye do show the Lord's death till He come,'—you keep this feast in remembrance of Him while He is absent in the body though present by His Spirit to your faith; but you look forward to a time when you shall no longer need to keep a symbolical memorial feast, but shall have Him present in the body as well as in spirit. The more we enjoy of the spiritual blessings of the Lord's Supper in our pilgrimage here, the more should we long for the time when He shall come again, when the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed, when all the children of God shall be gathered together for blessed communion with the returning Saviour. 'He that testifieth these things saith, Behold, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

Questions.

How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it? Larger Catechism, 171.

What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the time of the administration of it? Larger Catechism, 174.

What is the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Larger Catechism, 175.

Give reasons for the various things said in these answers in the Catechism.

How does the Lord's Supper point to the Second Coming of Christ?

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